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Dungeons & Dragons

ENORMOUS GREYHAWK POSTER MAP INSIDE

DUNGEON®

ISSUE 121 · APRIL 2005

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AH LA SMURF

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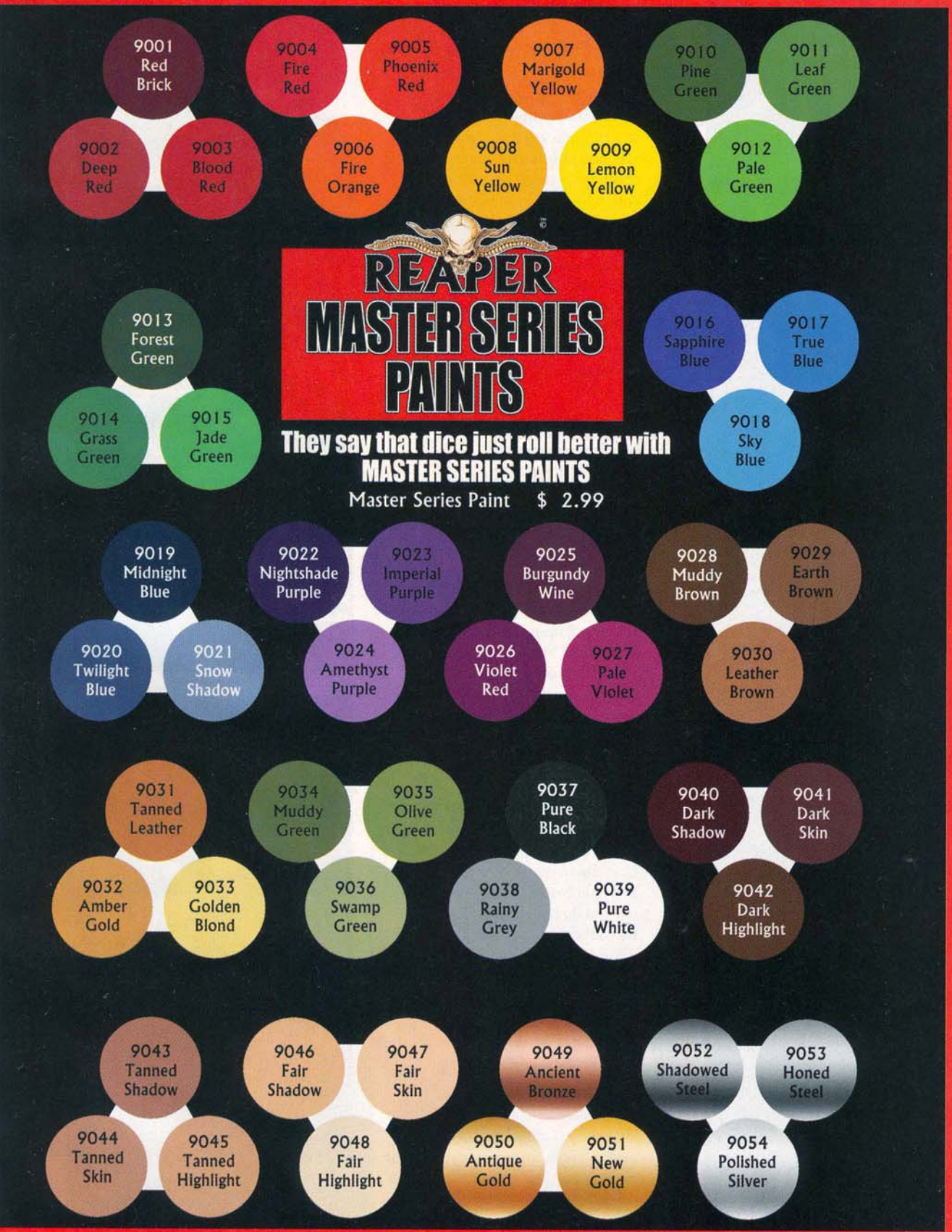

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SPECIAL FEATURE

GREYHAWK MAP INSERT

Our fourth and final giant poster map of the World of Greyhawk reveals the northwest Flanaess, where harsh weather, the ruins of war, and unbridled political ambition combine to create a landscape rife with adventure possibilities. What dangers lurk across the treacherous Causeway of Fiends? How will your players match sword and spell against the best warriors of the Frost Barbarians? And how hot burn the heretic fires of the Theocracy of the Pale? Cartography by Rob Lazzaretti. Painstaking research by Erik Mona.

ADVENTURES

16 FIEND'S EMBRACE

by Stephen S. Greer

Ages ago, the demon prince Graz'zt fashioned a cloak, the *Fiend's Embrace*, from the skin of a pit fiend and offered it as a gift to his lover, the witch queen Iggwilv. Today, rumors claim it is hidden in a keep in the Cold Marshes. Will agents of a jealous demigod get to the cloak before the PCs? A Greyhawk adventure for 4th-level characters.

40 THE STYES

by Richard Pett

Once, the Styes was the ocean gateway to a major city, her magnificent buildings crowning a man-made island held aloft on piers and boardwalks. Now, it has grown old and diseased, a perfect haven for sadists, cultists, and hungry things that flop and writhe. A D&D adventure for 9th-level characters.

66 SECRETS OF THE ARCH WOOD

by Skip Williams

A few years ago, the swords of Archendale went ahead with plans to log a section of the Arch Wood near their borders. Yet only a year later, the logging stopped abruptly. Archendale's rulers did not reveal a reason, but that reason is about to make itself known. A Forgotten Realms adventure for 13th-level characters.

ON THE COVER

The demon prince Graz'zt gives the witch queen Iggwilv a demonic cloak known as the *Fiend's Embrace* while trapped within the Lost Caverns of Tsojcanth in this stunning painting by fan-favorite cover artist Wayne Reynolds.

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CAMPAIGN WORKBOOK

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"Into your hands I pass the curacy; now the Museum is your charge to guard and preserve."

"For what end?" asked Shierl. "Earth expires, almost as you... Wherefore knowledge?"

"More now than ever," gasped Kerlin. "Attend: the stars are bright, the stars are fair; the banks know blessed magic to fleet you to youthful climes. Now—I go. I die."

Jack Vance
"Guyal of Sfere"

DUNGEON ADVENTURE PLAYER REWARDS!

Take advantage of the RPGA'S PLAYER REWARDS program by scoring points with the adventures from this issue of *DUNGEON*! Each adventure is worth 2 D&D Player Rewards points, and remains active until 5/28/05. Drop by www.rpga.com for more details, and use the following adventure codes:

Fiend's Embrace (121FE1DN)
The Styes (121TS1DN)
Secrets of the Arch Wood (121SA1DN)

GETTING IT OFF THE GROUND

By the time you read this, my new campaign will be in full swing. It's been far too long since I last sat on the better side of the screen, and my campaign workbook has accumulated sufficient dungeon sketches and diabolical ideas to keep my party in experience points for months. I've got rows and rows of miniatures just begging for paint, each with its own role to play in what I hope will become a long and fruitful endeavor. I am ready.

Best of all, it's the first campaign I'll have started since taking the helm here at *Dungeon*, and I now have the enormous resources of the magazine at my disposal. Not only does the job come with a free subscription and a complete archive of all 121 issues of the magazine, but I've also got access to all of the adventures we've accepted but have yet to publish. Most of you have to wait for the next adventures from folks like Greg A. Vaughan (*Istivin: City of Shadows*) or Robert J. Kuntz (*Maure Castle*), but for me it's just a quick trip to the submission pile. It's almost unfair, I know.

This new campaign will have a very special relationship with the magazine, as I plan to use it as the playtesting proving ground for the forthcoming Age of Worms Adventure Path. Marrying my campaign to the Adventure Path means I get to slack a bit while working (hey, I'm working on my campaign!) and work a bit while I'm slacking (hey, I'm working on the magazine!). It also means I get to use the talents of some of my favorite adventure designers to brutalize the characters of some of my favorite people—the devoted Paizo Publishing editorial staff, who will comprise most of the group.

Managing Editor James Jacobs, who has dutifully asked me "so, when is that new campaign starting, again?" every month since we put together issue #102, has threatened to play a gnome bard, a cleric of Murlynd, and a freakshow fortuneteller (or was it all three at the same time?). Art Director Sean Glenn is looking like he'll be an aloof valley elf, and there's no telling what the other office madmen will bring to the table. Maybe I'll even manage to get Editorial Assistant and Padawan Rules Lawyer Jeremy Walker to pry himself from his five (!) weekly games to swing by the apartment every other week. By the time you read this, I'll know for sure.

The campaign theme will be classic Dungeons & Dragons, in the Greyhawk mold. The action will play out before a collage of iconic landscapes—the forlorn cairn, the fetid swamp, the peerless metropolis of wizards and thieves. At every turn the heroes will face a new danger, leading to another piece of a growing mystery. And for each conclusion, three new questions will arise. Hated archvillains will turn out to be pawns of still more influential figures, who themselves are but servants of an even greater power. Wheels within wheels.

I'm out to capture the essence of D&D with my new campaign, and I've got just the players and authors to help me do it. I'm starting a new campaign, and couldn't be happier. Check out the new Age of Worms Adventure Path. Starting next Sunday at my place, and this summer in the pages of *Dungeon* magazine.

Don't forget your dice, and bring money for pizza. We're about to play some D&D.

Erik Mona
erik.mona@paizo.com

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Tell us what you think of this issue. Write to: Prison Mail, Paizo Publishing, 2700 Richards Road, Suite 201, Bellevue, WA 98005-4200 or send an email to dungeon@paizo.com.

Check out the *Dungeon* messageboards at paizo.com/dungeon

Dungeon #118

Dungeon kicked off the new year with the first of our soon-to-be-famous giant World of Greyhawk poster maps, and the response has been phenomenal. There is no question that Greyhawk has some of the most dedicated fans around. The question on everyone's lips: when do we get a giant poster map for other campaign settings? It's a difficult question to answer. First off, completing these Greyhawk maps nearly turned Erik and cartographer Rob Lazzaretti into mohrgs, so it'll be a while before we leap back into that particular self-inflicted hellscape. Second, we already did a similar Forgotten Realms map in *Dragon* #287–290. Back issues of that little gem are still available. *Dungeon* #113 contained a poster map of Eberron's continent of Khorvaire, but since the setting is so young, there simply aren't a lot of little-known towns, villages, and dungeons to reveal on a new version to make it worthwhile. Out of print settings such as Mystara are probably out of the question for now. But let us know what you think! We'd love to publish more poster maps, but haven't yet decided which area of which campaign world to feature. Any suggestions?

More Battle Maps

First off, I must say that I love both Monte Cook and Wil Wheaton's columns each month. Aside from the adventures, they are the reason I read *Dungeon*.

Second, I'd love to see battle map-sized versions of the maps that accompany each adventure as part of your online supplements to each issue. They are beautifully illustrated and I would love to be able to print them out at full miniatures scale (and with the resolution to accommodate the larger size) to present them to my players.

Keep up the good work!

Galen Ciscell
Monmouth, OR

Yeesh. That's a bit of a tall order, since we order (and pay for) the maps at a much smaller size. With the upcoming Age of Worms Adventure Path, however, we plan to publish a number of miniatures-scale poster maps to represent key encounter areas.

Thanks a Million, Des

Issue #11 and the adventure "Wards of Witching Ways" cemented my loyalty to your fantastic magazine, and *Dungeon*'s arrival at my local comic shop is one of the highlights of my month. I guess what I'm trying to say is thanks for the years of brilliant adventures. I live in a state (well, territory, actually) the size of Texas, with a population of 200k and only one place to buy your mag, so I'd also like to pay tribute to Des, my local comic shop dude. Love your work, Des.

I don't get to play as much as I like these days as I have my own restaurant and work weird-ass hours and rarely meet other gamers, so I really appreciate Prison Mail and articles by the likes of Wil Wheaton. D&D has been a big part of my life for 22 years and I love reading about enthusiastic gamers and their trials and tribulations.

Like most people passionate about D&D, I have faced my fair share of raised eyebrows and sometimes even outright ridicule for my love of roleplaying games. In this age of intelligence-draining reality TV (Will save, DC 12), cheesy spoon-fed sitcoms, and solo-play computer games, I celebrate my once-a-month gaming sessions as sport for my brain and a wonderful evening's escape with my mates.

To all my brothers and sisters in arms I say this:

Embrace the nerd within. Game on!

Jimmy Meller
Darwin, NT
Australia

Bitter No More!

I am writing in to commend the staff of Paizo for the excellent job they've done

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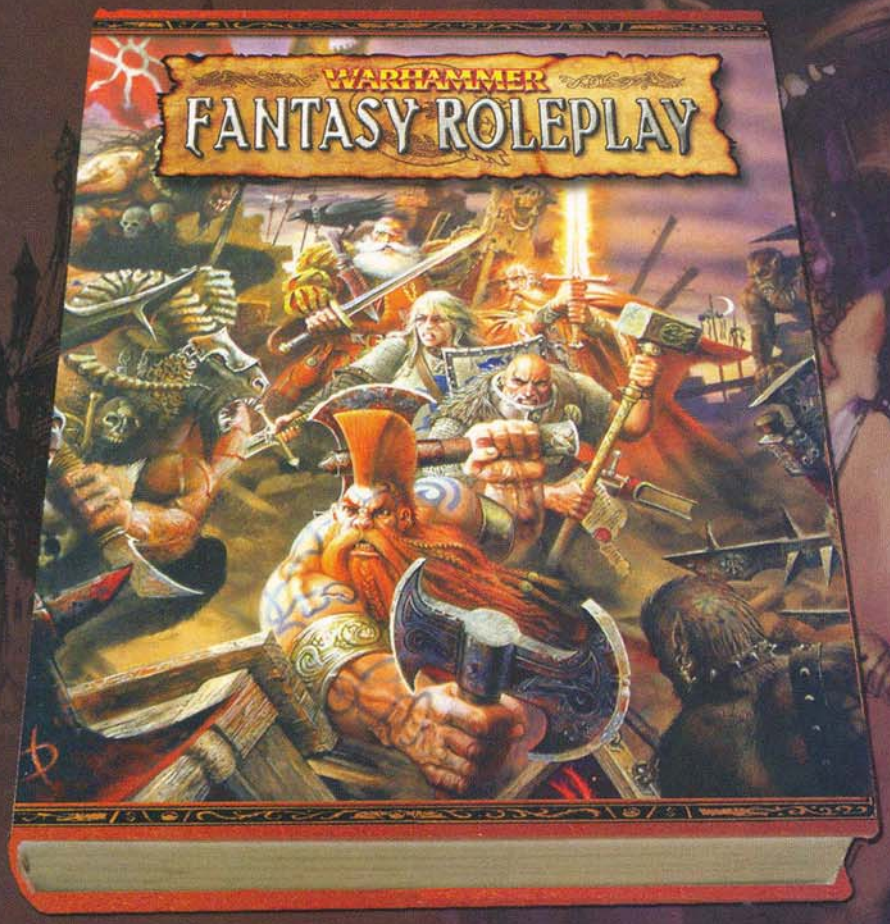

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This Month in Dragon

April #330

Dragon gives you the best in gaming, presenting new official rules, original game content, great advice, and the perfect inspiration for your D&D game. In each issue, you'll also see what cool products are on the horizon, find out what other players are up to, and get an insider's look at the industry. Get more from your game: Get *Dragon!*

Enter the Far Realm

by Bruce R. Cordell

Explore a dimension out of synch with the known planes in this expansive treatment by Bruce Cordell. Learn about cenebrotic blots, where the Far Realm touches the Material Plane, and steep your characters in the lore of cenebrosis, the ability to manipulate weird Far Realm energies. A host of new spells and creatures rounds out a spectacular article that is absolutely not to be missed.

Shapers of Shadow: Eberron's Umbragen

by Keith Baker

Learn about the mysterious shadow elves of Eberron from Keith Baker, the setting's creator! This reclusive drow sect dwells on the thrilling continent of Xen'drik, manipulating affairs with a special bond to a shadowy realm known as the Umbra. A new prestige class and a variety of feats give you everything you need to insert the Umbragen into your Eberron campaign

Coming Home

by Matt Forbeck

Four heroes of Eberron enter the Mournland to carve out a new home. A prelude to *Marked for Death*, the first novel in the upcoming Lost Mark Trilogy

Plus!

The Ecology of the Chuul, Class Acts, Bazaar of the Bizarre, First Watch, Scale Mail, Spellcraft, Sage Advice, and comics.

with *Dungeon* in the last year. Since my rather bitter letter in issue #100, I feel that things have really turned around! The current format of three short adventures of differing levels fits the magazine quite well. I've enjoyed the many homages to classic adventures, and I think you've struck the right balance between one-shots and linked adventure paths. Mr. Wheaton's articles provide a refreshingly human element to the magazine, and the focus on short campaign-building pieces is a nice counterpoint to specific adventures. Even the illustrations in the magazine have been quite good of late! So thank you, Paizo, and Erik Mona in particular, for putting together such an excellent gaming resource each month! You clearly listen to your readers, and your effort shows in every exciting issue. Keep up the great work!

Dan Forrest
Via Email

The Tweaks Worked

I wrote to Prison Mail back in issue ninety-something and voiced my opinion that your magazine was growing ever more foul. I also mentioned that the super-ultra-mammoth-huge-extensive-giant adventures should be kept to a minimum, because shorter adventures can be linked together by the DM to create super-ultra-(see above) adventures, long-running campaigns, or even worlds.

After the update of your magazine, I have to say, "very impressive!" I completely reverse my opinion of your magazine. The new format is superb. Three different adventures for three adventure levels? Perfect! Articles for helping out a game master with ideas and encounters? Excellent. The first thing I find myself turning to read is Wil Save.

Although I find your magazine in the best shape I have ever seen it in, there are some that don't agree with me. Rationalizing that you cannot please everyone, I have been reading the comments of my fellow readers and have a few of my own. First and foremost, there has to be advertising within the pages of a magazine. Any magazine. If there were no advertisements, the subscription costs would be somewhere around the price of purchasing a large castle—per month! In addition, you have had ongoing Adventure Paths, forming huge adventures, and still people write in to tell you to put huge, single adventures in your magazine. Here's an idea: pick a couple of low-level, a couple of mid-level, and a couple of high-level adventures from this magazine, and there you have it, a mammoth adventure that will take months to complete, all with minimal tweaking. What? You only have one issue? Then pick up some back issues or subscribe. One other thing—YOUR panel's top 30 adventure list [*Dungeon* #116] was great. Yes, I have my own opinions on what should be on the list, but it is not MY list, is it? Great job!

Although I find your magazine to be in a great format in its current condition, it wouldn't be normal if I didn't complain about something. While moving a while back, I never received two issues of your magazine (#112 and #113), even though I mailed out change of address cards a month before that. I have to say that given that one little bump in the road, your magazine is doing great. I believe you are headed in the right direction, and should continue in that direction, making your tweaks where needed.

Your "pat on the back": you made me a believer.

Paul Nowak
Madison, WI

One of the best parts about listening to your readers is getting letters like the two printed above. It's nice to know that the changes we've implemented since issue #100 (and specifically since #114) have met with such general approval from the audience. As nearly every Dungeon editor before me has virtually screamed in the magazine's letter column—this is your magazine. If you don't like something, let us know how you feel and we might very well make some changes you'll appreciate.

It's actually been a while since we've received any letters complaining about the

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number of ads in the magazine. I think we've gotten to a point where most readers realize that the ads keep the magazine's production values high and the price extremely reasonable for the value. Plus, did you check out the woman on the back cover of last issue? Whew!

You're Welcome, Welcome, Welcome

Thank you, thank you, thank you for the monthly gems in Campaign Workbook. Each article is interesting, well thought-out, and immensely practical for this overworked DM. I've been so impressed that I keep copies in my own "campaign workbook" for future reference (which was no doubt your intention). As a bonus, the two-page format fits neatly on a double-sided copy. This DM thinks you've really, really hit the mark with the new format, and hopes you keep it coming!

Todd Rooks
Cordova, TN

I came up with the idea for the Campaign Workbook in precisely the manner you suggest—every DM should keep an idea notebook filled with campaign seeds, NPC ideas, and little tidbits for later use in the campaign. For a look at how I use mine, check out the notes that appear above my editorial in this issue.

Even the stuff from your workbook that doesn't find its way into the game immediately might come in handy months—or even years—later. I suggest finding a small, nicely bound book filled with graph paper—it makes it so much easier to draw up rough maps while you're stuck on a plane or waiting for a meeting to begin (or, you know, while taking "notes" during the meeting). If the articles we print end up making their way into your campaign workbooks, we've done our job.

Greyhawk for Sale?

I was wondering if it would be possible to purchase the 4-piece poster map after the last piece has shipped in March. However, I'd like to purchase the complete map, as in one piece. If you were to do a Collector's Edition printed on something fancier than poster paper, so much the better. (Faux vellum, cotton screen, or heck even 100-weight paper would be nice.) Now, I understand that the printing aspect of this would not be cheap, but for single-piece complete poster-quality map, I'd be more than willing to drop a C-note. For better quality material, more.

On a side note, your subscription "deal" for online subscriptions simply is not much of a deal. I currently "subscribe" through my local comic and game shop, where I get a 15% discount on all purchases, including your magazines. Though getting them a few days earlier would be nice, I figure for a cost savings to me, I support not only your Atlasian efforts, but also my local community.

Keep up the good work and let me know if an arrangement can be made to purchase a complete map. Who knows, maybe if you threw the offer out there you could get a decent print run of 1,000 copies of the full-size map.

Todd Fry
Via Email

I applaud your efforts to support your local game shop. Good local game stores are essential to the success of the industry, and help to keep the gaming community strong. Unfortunately, not everyone has a local game store (or even a local store, for that matter), so we've got to do what we can to ensure that DUNGEON *finds its way to the largest number of readers as possible. That means offering subscriptions. Since it is less expensive to process a subscription we receive through our website, we prefer to pass on that savings to the customer as a special incentive.*

The short response: If you can support your local retailer, please do. If that's not an option, drop by paizo.com and we'll set you up.

The prospect of a vellum GREYHAWK *map sets me a-droolin', but unfortunately we aren't able to offer an "all-in-one" poster map at this time. I agree that such an item would be a big seller, but for now the only way to get the maps is to track down the issues in which they appear (#118–121). A lot of readers have mentioned online that they've laminated their maps, which helps to improve their durability at the very least. Drop by our messageboards at paizo.com, and you ought to be able to get some lamination tips from readers who have already tried it out.*

The Realms Remembered

I have been picking up *DUNGEON* on the newsstands the past couple of months and I should be getting my first subscription issue soon, but I was wondering if there were any more FORGOTTEN REALMS adventures in upcoming *DUNGEON* issues.

MetalBard
Posted at Paizo.com

If this issue's "Secrets of the Arch Wood" isn't enough to tide you over until the next year in the Dale Reckoning, be sure to check us out in issue #126, when FORGOTTEN REALMS *expert Eric L. Boyd brings us "The Dungeon of the Crypt," a three-issue exploration of one of the most famous dungeons in Waterdeep. A few months later, our old friend Wil Upchurch will stop by with "The Twisted Run," a sequel to issue #103's "Forest of Blood." For even more* REALMS *goodness, be sure to check out* DRAGON *magazine, which is currently in talks with Ed Greenwood to launch a significant* FORGOTTEN REALMS *column in 2006. It'll be a good year for* REALMS *fans, I assure you. And, by the way, we're always looking for good* FORGOTTEN REALMS *submissions...*

Submission Queries

At some point in the future, I was hoping to submit a couple of adventures for the *DUNGEON* editors to review. However, before I do such a thing, I have a couple of questions to which I couldn't find the answers on the website (paizo.com/dungeon).

1. I'm not an American, but rather a European. Does this hurt my chances of having my adventures published in your magazine? Likewise, will it cause any problems with payment?

2. Does the adventure have to contain maps? I'm a very, very sucky artist and would rather hand in an adventure with a clear description of the locations than go through all the hassle of attempting to draw a suitable map.

COLD STEEL REIGN
The fall of the comet came at the height of the Civil War. Now, 200 years later, what's left of humanity crawls from the ruins to find a world lost in the throws of a new Dark Age. Here, bullets buy whiskey faster than coins and pure water is worth more than pure gold. This is a new world of gun leather and sorcery, where the dead rise, and machines lust for blood. Where Gunslingers ride to the calling of the Grail, and the valiant rise on their cunning from the most unlikely of places. This is a world lost in time and struggling to free itself from the tightening grip of a cold steel reign.
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Next Month in Dungeon

May #122

Final Resting Place

by Michael Kortes

Most adventurers like to think that when their number is finally up, their colleagues will bring them home, either to be raised or at least returned to their families for a proper burial. But how far will the PCs go in order to do right by a fallen adventurer? And will they draw the line at hauling his coffin out of the Underdark? A D&D adventure for 3rd-level characters.

Fiendish Footprints

by Tito Leati

A microscopic map etched into the surface of a tiny knag of wood puts the PCs on the trail of the *Fiendish Foot*, an item of vast necromantic potential. Will your heroes beat a band of hobgoblins to the *Foot*? And what of the object's vampiric protectors? A D&D adventure for 6th-level characters.

The Root of Evil

by Mike Mearls

A sickness festers in the heart of a great city—the demon tree Malgarius spreads its diseased roots through paving stones and courtyards. Only the most powerful adventurers have what it takes to enter the demon tree and return alive. A D&D adventure for 18th-level characters.

Backdrop: The Ring of Storms

by Keith Baker

The land of Xen'drik holds many secrets, wonders long forgotten by the children of the modern age. Cyclopean ruins recall the heyday of an empire of giants, whose savage descendents lurk in the shadows of their former glory. Xen'drik also hosts the ruins of a mysterious sect of long-lost elves called the Qabalrin, whose shattered cities lie within the mysterious Ring of Storms. An EBERRON backdrop of exploration and doom straight from the setting's creator!

3. If my adventure is rejected, does this mean I cannot send it to other magazines for possible publication? I ask because the Standard Disclosure Form that has to be included in the adventure query says that once the query is sent, the adventure is considered property of Paizo Publishing.

4. In the Submission Guidelines it states that the magazine prefers action-packed adventures. With action I'm assuming the magazine means lots and lots of battles. Are the chances of a politically-based adventure thusly more often rejected or will you judge both by the same standards?

Yargo Bool
Via Email

Managing Editor James Jacobs responds:

1. We publish adventures by authors from all over the world, so where a writer is from is a non-issue for submissions or payment. No worries there.

2. The submission must contain all maps pertinent to the adventure. They don't need to be artistic (since we use professional cartographers for all the maps that see print), but they do need to be clear and legible. Simply providing descriptions of the locations won't do; this is a surefire way to have inconsistencies between the maps and the adventure text.

3. If we elect to not publish your adventure, it remains yours and you can do with it what you wish; Paizo doesn't own any of it until you sign a contract. So if we reject a proposal, you can go ahead and send it out to other publishers with no fears.

4. "Action" doesn't always equate to battles, but it usually does. Still, action can also relate to political intrigue, courtroom trials, social interactions, natural disasters, or anything else that provides drama. Think of action in a D&D adventure as any point where the players get to roll dice to determine outcomes. This could be a fight, or it could be a series of ability and skill checks made to determine the outcome of a fairground competition. As long as it's exciting, it counts as action. Politically-based adventures are not more often rejected; the reason you don't see many in the magazine is because they are very rarely submitted.

A Note from the Gulf

I'd just like to thank Erik Mona and the rest of the *DUNGEON* crew for bringing the magazine up to an amazing standard. I'm currently serving allied forces in the Arabian Gulf, but my subscriptions still get here and every now and then I get a chance to browse the Paizo messageboards when things aren't too hectic. I've only just received issue #116, but I'm eagerly anticipating the next few issues Involving the GREYHAWK maps and adventures in Istivin.

Once again thank you to all involved, you're giving me and the guys up here a great place to escape from the realities in life.

Elthurien
Posted at Paizo.com

No, man, thank you for serving in the armed forces at such an uncertain time. We're very proud that our magazine helps military folks all over the world pass the time and keep their minds occupied with something fun. You guys are the best. To all the military gamers out there, the DUNGEON staff salutes you!

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Submissions: Interested in writing for the magazine? Download our submission guidelines by visiting the *DUNGEON* homepage at paizo.com/dungeon.

THE WORLD OF GREYHAWK
LEGEND

Mountains

Volcano

Passage

Hills

Clear

Desert

Deciduous forest

Coniferous forest

Jungle

River

Swamp

Glacier

Village

Town

City

Castle

Ruin

Dungeon

Fiend's Embrace

BY STEPHEN S. GREER
BY ATTILA ADORJANY
BY TED REED

GREYHAWK | LOW-LEVEL (1ST–5TH) | COLD SWAMP & DUNGEON CRAWL

Many hundreds of years ago, a pit fiend named Drokarrn was captured by demons during one of the countless battles of the Blood War. These demons brought the captured devil before their master, Graz'zt, one of the most powerful demons in the Abyss. Graz'zt skinned the pit fiend alive and had one of his most talented artisans transform its hide into a magic cloak. He named it *Fiend's Embrace*, and offered it as a gift to his lover, the witch queen Iggwilv. During one of their many spats, Iggwilv gave the cloak to one of her other admirers on the Material Plane. The cloak has since changed hands many times through the long years since its creation. Eventually, it was lost and forgotten.

"Fiend's Embrace" is a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventure designed for four 4th-level characters. It takes place in the inhospitable environs of the Cold Marshes in the WORLD OF GREYHAWK, but can easily be adapted to other settings as detailed in the Adapting the Adventure sidebar.

Adventure Background

Potent magic items such as *Fiend's Embrace* have a way of turning up. The wizard Arakk learned of the cloak after purchasing an antique desk from a recently deceased wizard named Zarlag, whose belongings were recently sold off in an estate auction. While restoring the desk, he stumbled upon a hidden drawer that contained a number of notes and a hauntingly rendered map fragment. The notes were in a strange code that contained elements of both Infernal and Abyssal. Unable to decipher the notes, Arakk took them to a sage named Yelarial and paid him to translate them. The notes turned out to be excerpts and observations on the *Demonomicon*, a fantastically rare text concerned with fiends of the lower planes and rumored to have been penned by none other than Iggwilv herself. One section indicates that a potent magic cloak named *Fiend's Embrace* might be hidden in a place called Cold Stones Keep. The map that went along with the notes showed the location of this mysterious keep—it lay hidden deep in the Cold Marshes.

Unbeknownst to Arakk, Yelarial isn't the most honest sage in town. He makes a regular practice of reselling information, and after returning the notes on *Fiend's Embrace* to Arakk, Yelarial promptly sold copies to several interested parties. One of these was Matyara, the leader of a group of mercenaries loyal to the evil demigod Iuz. She realized that her demonic patron would be very interested in *Fiend's Embrace*, as his parents were Graz'zt and Iggwilv. Matyara gathered her mercenaries, the Fingers of Iuz, and prepared an expedition of her own to Cold

Stones Keep, hoping to find the cloak and present it to Iuz for a huge reward.

Adventure Summary

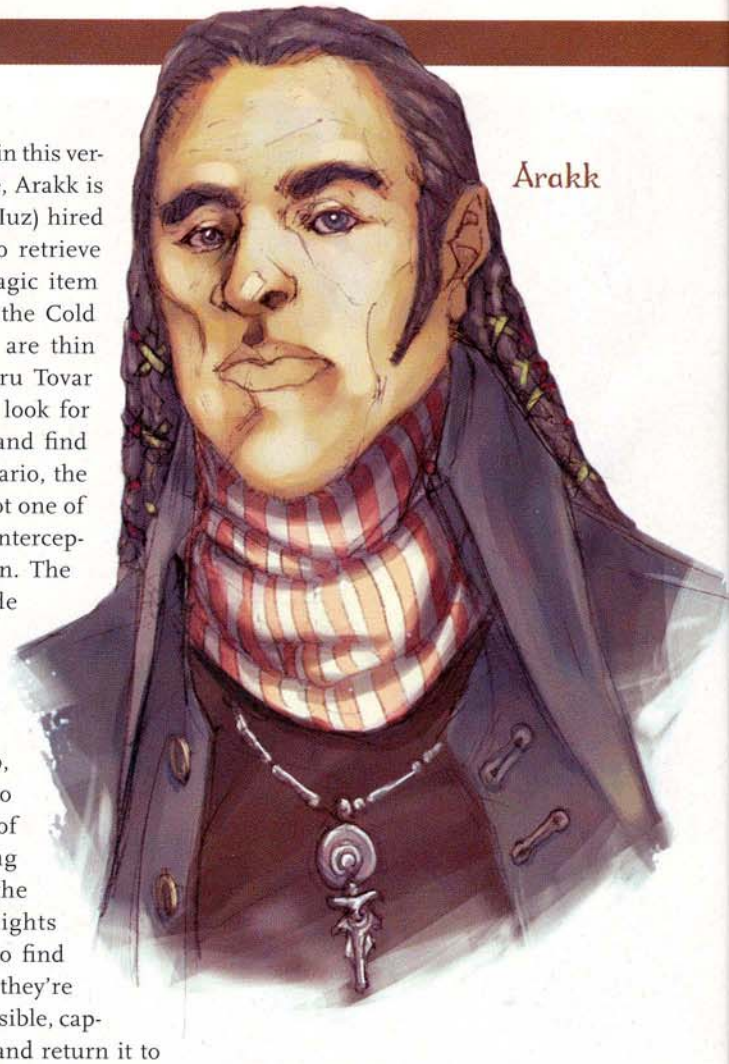
Arakk hires the PCs to travel to Cold Stones Keep to search for *Fiend's Embrace*. He provides them copies of the notes and a map which shows the approximate location of the keep. The PCs may choose to expore several areas of note on their map, but ultimately they arrive at Cold Stones Keep. At the keep the PCs find the place has become the lair of several indigenous creatures. They must also contend with the Fingers of Iuz mercenaries who are also searching for the cloak. The cloak itself resides in the flooded dungeon beneath the Keep, in the possession of an aquatic troll named Shplizzmak.

Adventure Hooks

Arakk can play the role of a sage, wealthy aristocrat, or renowned collector in your campaign, or perhaps a combination of all three. Arakk is a handsome man in his mid-forties of average height and proportionate weight. His long black hair is tied in intricate braids, decorated in the current style with red and gold ribbons. He wears fashionable clothing and jewelry that hints of wealth without being ostentatious. His demeanor indicates confidence and intelligence. Arakk's true interests in the occult and creatures of the Abyss are a closely guarded secret—he could be gathering fiendish artifacts to use as bargaining chips with powerful NPCs, or he could simply be a collector of things deemed morally repugnant by society.

Arakk wants the PCs to follow the map to Cold Stones Keep, explore it, and determine if *Fiend's Embrace* is still hidden within its walls. He gives the PCs a copy of Zarlag's map and journal notes to aid in their journey. He offers to pay the PCs full market value for the cloak if they can find it for him. He also gives the party four *potions of cure moderate wounds* up front to increase their chances of survival.

Alternately, a Knight of the Hart based in the town of Eru Tovar has discovered that agents of Iuz are operating in town. After investigating further, he discovers that Arakk (in this version of the adventure, Arakk is a suspected agent of Iuz) hired the Fingers of Iuz to retrieve some sort of evil magic item from a lost Keep in the Cold Marshes. Resources are thin for the knights in Eru Tovar at this time, so they look for adventurers to hire and find the PCs. In this scenario, the PCs' goal becomes not one of retrieval but one of interception and investigation. The knights can provide a map of the Cold Marshes for the PCs that shows the approximate location of Cold Stones Keep, and they ask them to prevent the Fingers of Iuz from completing their mission. At the same time, the knights would like the PCs to find out what exactly it is they're looking for, and if possible, capture the magic item and return it to the knights' custody so they can prevent it from falling into enemy hands.



Arakk

CHAPTER ONE: THE COLD MARSHES

Although Arakk can live anywhere in the world, the adventure itself is set in the Cold Marshes. As a result, if your campaign is set in some distant nation, you'll need to address the fact that in order to get to the Cold Marshes the PCs might be faced with a fair amount of travel. Arakk agrees to pay travel expenses for ship passage, horses, or any other form of mundane transport; you can gloss over this journey if you wish, or you can spice it up with incedental encounters along the way. In any case, the adventure begins as the PCs reach the edge of the Cold Marshes, most likely staging their expedition from the closest friendly town: Eru Tovar.

♛ **Eru Tovar (large town)**: Conventional; AL CN; Population 4,200; 3,000 gp limit; Assets 630,000 gp; Mixed (96% human, 2% halfling, 1% elf, 1% other races).

Authority Figure: Bargru, The Fearless Wolf Leader, Tarkhan of all the Wegwuir, Commander of the Relentless Horde (male human fighter 14/illusionist 2).

Eru Tovar is peopled by nomadic warriors, commoners, merchants, travelers, and a few adventurers. The laws are simple, straightforward, and subject to change as the tarkhan sees fit. As a frontier town, Eru Tovar bustles with activity. Vendors vie with one another to hawk their wares and travelers and locals clutch their money purses protectively. The smoky scent of rustic food fills the air. Lightly armored men with scimitars and tattoos marking them as Swords of the Tarkhan patrol the streets, ever vigilant in maintaining the peace and enforcing the Tarkhan's laws.

Exploring the Cold Marshes

Before beginning this adventure, DMs should become familiar with the rules for getting lost, marsh terrain, aquatic terrain, and underwater combat found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* pgs. 86–87, 88, and 92–93. Some of the weather conditions prevalent in the Cold Marshes are described later in this section.

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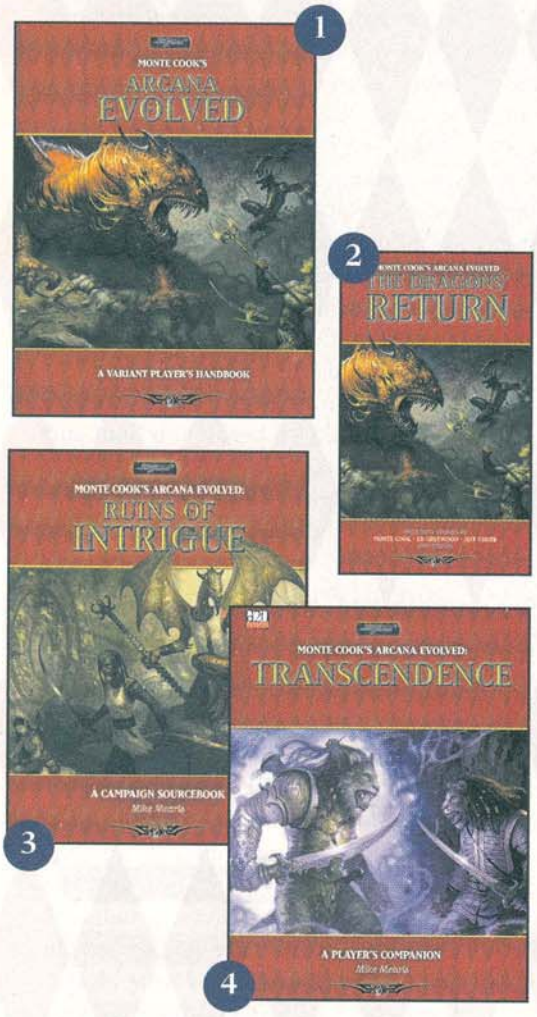

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SWORD & SORCERY

MALHAVOC PRESS

The Cold Marshes are a vast wetland shrouded in chilling fog and ground mist. In places, the soggy ground gives way to large but shallow bodies of cold, slightly acidic water. Heath, sedge, and stunted, moss-covered trees are the most common forms of vegetation. All year round, even in summer, those that enter the Cold Marshes are at risk from natural and unnatural conditions such as blackfrost and the dreaded mist of undeath.

Overland Movement: The Cold Marshes are trackless swamps, and as such reduce overland movement rates by 1/2; a party that moves at a speed of 30 feet can cover 12 miles per day. The distance from Eru Tovar to Cold Stones Keep is approximately 100 miles.

Temperature and Hypothermia: The temperature of the waters isn't much higher than freezing, averaging 36° Fahrenheit at the time of this adventure. Unprotected characters must make a Fortitude save each hour (DC 15, +1 per previous check) or take 1d6 points of nonlethal damage. Characters who wear cold weather clothing or have any measure of resistance to cold are protected from this damage. Immersion in the near freezing waters brings a greater danger. Immersion in water calls for an immediate Fortitude save to resist the effects of the cold temperature; cold weather clothing does not offer any protection in this case. Worse, the DC of all Fortitude saves to avoid taking damage from cold or resisting cold-based spells and effects is increased by 10 until the character and his clothes become dry.

As long as a character is suffering nonlethal damage from the cold temperature, he succumbs to mild hypothermia and is fatigued. A character suffering from mild hypothermia who fails a Fortitude save against the cold is beset by moderate hypothermia and is treated as exhausted. A character suffering from moderate hypothermia who fails a Fortitude save to avoid the effects of cold or exposure is beset by severe hypothermia and is treated as disabled.

Getting Lost: If the PCs have the map to Cold Stones Keep, they must make a DC 7 Survival check each hour of movement to avoid becoming lost. Without the map, the check becomes a DC 13 Survival check.

Encounters: There's an 8% chance of an encounter per hour of travel or per four hours of rest. If an encounter occurs, roll d% and consult the following table to determine what sort of creature is encountered. If you roll an encounter with a creature from a sourcebook you don't have access to, simply reroll the encounter.

Weather: The Cold Marshes are notorious not only for the strange and terrible creatures that dwell within them, but also for the unusually deadly weather that manifests therein. Each morning, roll d% and consult the following table to determine what kind of weather the PCs encounter during that day on the Marshes.

Rain: Rain reduces visibility by half, resulting in a –4 penalty on Spot and Search checks. Characters exposed to rain have a greater chance of suffering from hypothermia if they remain wet for too long.

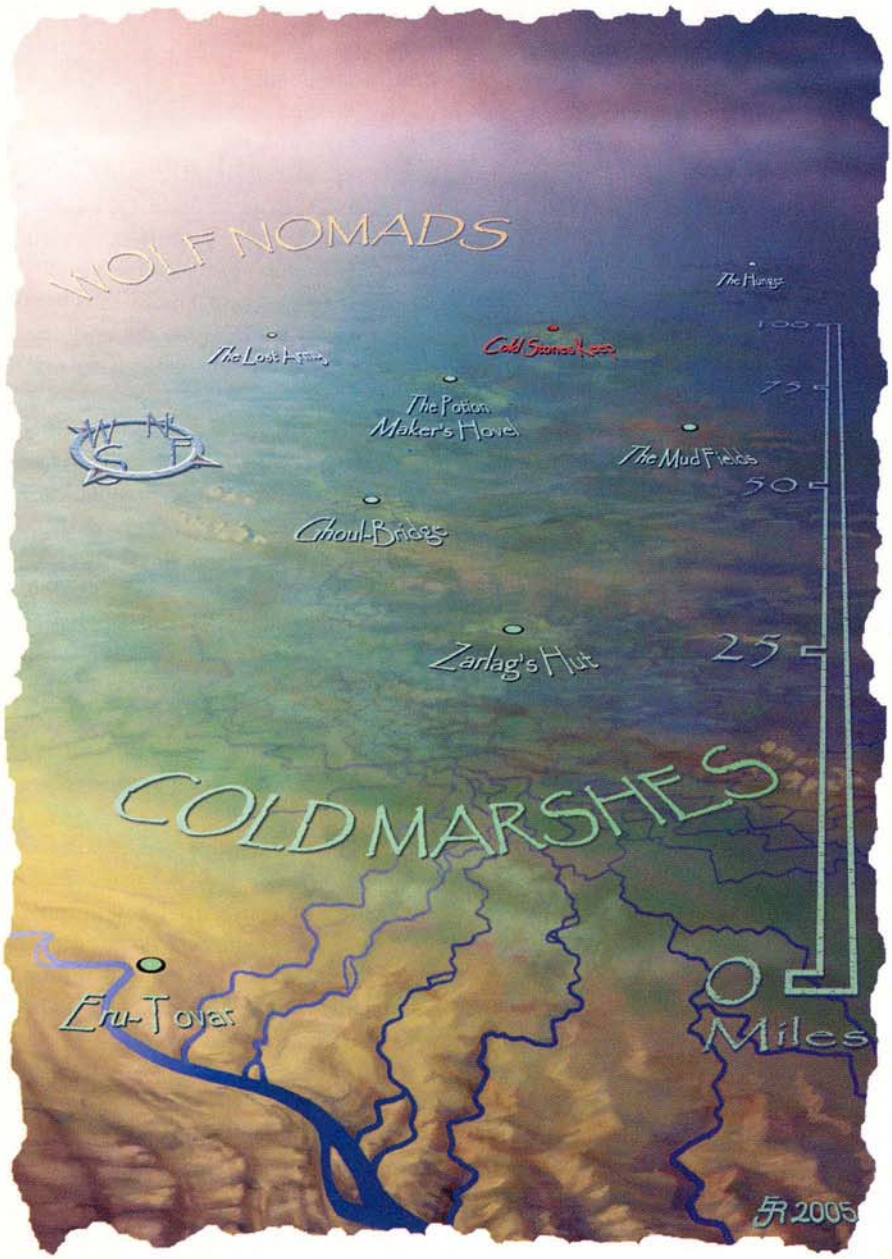
Ground Fog: A 1-ft.-deep layer of fog covers the ground and marsh waters. Long-distance visibility is not impacted, but snags and water obscured by the fog slow overland movement by an additional 50%. Characters who take more than a single move action in a round must make a DC 10 Reflex save to avoid

Cold Marshes Encounters

d%	Creature	Average EL	Source
01–02	1 five-headed cryohydra	6	*Monster Manual* 156
03–04	1 will-o'-wisp	6	*Monster Manual* 255
05–07	1d4 boggles	5	*Monster Manual II* 33
08–10	1d6 Large snow spiders	5	*Frostburn* 154
11–13	1d3 ogre zombies	5	*Monster Manual* 267
14–16	1d3 wights	5	*Monster Manual* 255
17–19	1 wraith	5	*Monster Manual* 258
20–25	1d4 quaggoths	5	*Monsters of Faerûn* 75
26–28	1d3 ice toads	4	*Frostburn* 141
29–32	1d4 shadows	4	*Monster Manual* 221
33–35	1 gray ooze	4	*Monster Manual* 202
36–38	1 vine horror	4	*Fiend Folio* 185
39–44	1d6 frost folk	4	*Frostburn* 130
45–50	2d4 gnolls	4	*Monster Manual* 130
51–57	2d6 dire rats	3	*Monster Manual* 64
58–61	2d6 human skeletons	3	*Monster Manual* 226
62–65	2d4 human zombies	3	*Monster Manual* 266
66–68	1d8 crested felldrakes	3	*Monster Manual II* 98
69–71	1 allip	3	*Monster Manual* 10
72–73	1d2 ghasts	3	*Monster Manual* 119
74–75	1 vodyanoi	3	*Frostburn* 160
76–79	1d6 Small snow spiders	2	*Frostburn* 154
80–82	1d6 ghouls	2	*Monster Manual* 119
83–85	1d6 rusalkas	2	*Frostburn* 150
86–88	1d6 wolf skeletons	2	*Monster Manual* 226
89–92	1d6 Medium snow spiders	2	*Frostburn* 154
93–96	1 rat swarm	2	*Monster Manual* 239
97–98	1 flotsam ooze	2	*Fiend Folio* 17
99–100	1 bloodbloater aquatic ooze	1	*Fiend Folio* 16

Cold Marshes Weather

d%	Weather
01–10	Clear
11–25	Overcast
26–40	Rain
41–55	Ground fog
56–65	Light mist
66–75	Thick fog
76–80	Blackfrost
81–85	Chilling mist
86–90	Vampiric mist
91–95	Choking fog
96–100	Mist of undeath



tripping on a hidden snag and falling prone. Characters who fall prone have a 25% chance of falling into a shallow pool of near-freezing water.

Light Mist: Visibility is reduced to 100 feet, but unlike the thicker ground fog, this light mist doesn't impact movement.

Thick Fog: Thick fog reduces visibility to 5 feet. Beyond this, only vague shapes can be seen in the mist. Thick fog reduces movement as ground fog. The Survival check DC to avoid becoming lost increases by +10.

Blackfrost: A numbing chill settles on the marsh. A thin rime of eerie black ice forms on the water and plants of the marsh. The temperature drops to severe cold (0° F). Unprotected characters must now make Fortitude saves once every 10 minutes to avoid hypothermia. A character who has a cold weather outfit or fur clothing must save once per hour, but a character with both a cold weather outfit and fur clothing (or any character with magical resistance to cold) is still safe at this temperature range.

Chilling Mist: This unnaturally cold fog combines the effects of blackfrost and thick fog.

Vampiric Mist: For most of the day, this weather acts like light mist. Each hour, there's a 25% chance that a patch of mist infused with foul necromancy wafts over the PCs. This small cloud of dense mist reduces visibility as thick fog for 1d4 rounds before dissipating naturally. Worse, the mist drains blood at the rate of 1 point of Strength damage per round, turning the mist red. Characters caught in the mist can resist a round's Strength damage with a successful DC 14 Fortitude save, and a *gust of wind* or similar spell immediately disperses it. The mist follows its victims unerringly for the 1d4 rounds it exists, so attempts to run away fail unless a victim dives underwater where the mist cannot follow.

Choking Fog: This nasty yellowish mist functions as light mist, save that it smells horribly of rotting flesh and vegetation. Each hour, a character in the mist must make a DC 14 Fortitude save or become sickened for one hour. Sickened characters take a –2 penalty on attack rolls, saving throws, skill checks, and ability checks.

Mist of Undeath: This mist is dark and shadowy, and functions as thick fog. Encounter checks increase to a 15% chance per hour, whether the PCs are on the move or not. If an encounter occurs, there's a 75% chance the encounter is with 1d3 shadows (75%) or 1 wraith (25%). Otherwise, roll on the encounter table normally to determine what is encountered.

Zarlag's Notes and Map

Zarlag's notes on the *Demonomicon* are disorganized, but Arakk has marked which portions of the notes relate to the Cold Marshes and their environs. It seems that Zarlag spent several years living in a hut in the marshes. He believed that Abyssal forces tainted the marsh, and spent a long time investigating the marsh's flora and fauna. One of his theories was that several powerful fiendish magic items are hidden in various locations in the Cold Marshes. The nearest of these is a magical cloak called *Fiend's Embrace* Zarlag believes is somewhere inside the ruins of nearby Cold Stones Keep.

Zarlag's map indicates several areas of interest but reveals little information

about them. Three of these locations (Lost Army, the Mud Field, and the Hunger) are not detailed further in this adventure and can be developed in any way you wish.

Cold Stones Keep: Zarlag writes, "In my explorations I have discovered an old ruined keep. These are always the worst kind of landmarks since they attract foul monsters and are often haunted as well.

"Its stones are of basalt, but felt exceptionally cold to the touch. The design was very basic: high outer walls, two towers, a gatehouse, bailey, well, and two levels of aboveground chambers with a dungeon beneath.

"I expected the dungeon to be completely flooded, but the swollen door leading down had allowed minimal seepage. There was a strong acrid odor in the air, which I considered a bad omen. I got as far as the first room before deciding to let the place molder in peace.

"The keep appears to be sinking into the marsh. Water from adjacent bogs fills parts of the bailey to a depth of about three inches. Years from now I wouldn't be surprised to find the entire thing under water. I pray I make it back there before then, and hope to find *Fiend's Embrace* still hidden within."

Ghoul Bridge: Zarlag writes, "This bridge was so conspicuously out of place that it demanded investigation. I spent a fortnight here with a group of dwarven stonemasons. During the first day, nearly a dozen lacedons sprang from the water and attacked us. As well as accomplished stonemasons, the dwarves were seasoned fighters and they slew the creatures with ease. The lacedon attacks continued daily, however. When not defending ourselves the dwarves and I determined that the bridge is approximately 1,000 years old.

"The dwarves say it may be the dark artifice of necromantic Ur-Flan mystics of a bygone age. The designs and decorative relief are so weathered that none of us could guess at what they originally were. What we assumed were humanoid busts along the rails were too eroded to place."

The Hunger: The plant life in this region seems strangely twisted and malevolent. Zarlag writes that a particularly powerful fiendish item, perhaps even an actual fiend, may be hidden somewhere within this tangled region. On all his attempts to explore the place, twisted hateful treants managed to turn him back.

Lost Army: This large, low hill served as an encampment for a group of mercenaries that became lost in the marshes many years ago. They froze to death in their sleep, and now their spirits haunt this hill, which remains littered to this day with their ice-encrusted bodies. Zarlag avoided this area.

The Mud Field: This is a miserable quagmire of bubbling mud, heated by numerous hot springs. On clear days, Zarlag notes one can just see an intriguing ring of stone menhirs in the center of the mud field, yet he has never been brave enough to enter the quagmire to investigate since the mud is infested with strange humanoid frog-like monsters.

Potion Maker's Hovel: Zarlag writes, "I heard rumors from the gnolls that there was a woman many miles to the northwest of my hut who crafted potions for sale. The Cold Marshes are just about the oddest place to run a business in, so I was intrigued. After a week of travel I arrived at her hovel.

"Within the branches of the largest tree in the area perched a multileveled hut. I had to hack my way through thick undergrowth to get to the island the tree juts from. There, I was confronted by a most unpleasant old crone. She was off-putting at first, but seemed to warm to some well-placed flattery. Her name is Slurrozh.

"She was not much for conversation, but I learned that she is a cleric of some sort. Because the ruins and other sites adventurers come to explore are often sunk below the waters of the marsh, she sells many *potions of water breathing* and *water walking*. I bought one myself."

"I would like to have learned more about her, but Slurrozh grew impatient with me when it became clear I wasn't all that interested in her wares. She told me to leave unless I had more things to buy. She had a look in her eye that told me that my visit was at an end one way or the other, so I took my leave."

Zarlag's Hut: This is where Zarlag lived for several years. There is mention in his notes of a barbarian named Krudin who sometimes helped with physical labor (chopping firewood, fighting off monsters, and repairing the hut) and lived nearby, although Krudin's home is not marked on the map.

Zarlag's Hut (EL 4)

A small hut, perched atop thick timbers thrust down into an earthen mound, sits alone in the marsh here. Smoke wafts from a tin chimney, and despite the environs, the hut itself looks rather homey and dry.

The hut stands 15 feet above a little island that measures 60 feet across. It has shuttered windows and a shingled roof coming to a peak 18 feet high. Zarlag's Hut has weathered the years of exposure to the rotting damp by virtue of its bronzewood timbers. The hut's entrance is a trap door, accessed from below via a rope ladder that is currently pulled up into the hut itself. The trap door is closed and barred; without the rope ladder, it's a DC 15 Climb check to clamber up the nearest timber to it.

Inside, an iron stove is used to cook meals and heat the hut. A trapdoor in the ceiling leads to a small storage area that holds blankets, torches, and preserved food. A desk, sturdy bed, and small table with two mismatched chairs complete the furnishings.

Bronzewood trapdoor: 2 in. thick; Hardness 10; hp 30; Break DC 27.

Creature: Although Zarlag hasn't lived here for many years, his hut hasn't been unoccupied in that time. A near-feral swamper named Krudin lives here now. Zarlag once paid Krudin to do odd jobs around the hut, hunt for food, and to generally act as a guard against the swamp's more dangerous denizens. In return for this service, Zarlag paid Krudin a small wage and let him sleep in the hut during the cold season.

Since Zarlag left, Krudin has taken up residence in the hut. He's a massive man, standing 6'10" and weighing nearly 400 pounds. Completely bald, he nevertheless has a huge auburn beard worn in tangled braids and decorated with bones. His disheveled appearance is an odd counterpoint to the polished greatsword he holds lovingly. Krudin found

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the greatsword on the edge of the Lost Army some years ago; unfortunately, the sword is cursed.

Krudin is singing and chuckling to himself as he cooks some stew for dinner when the PCs approach. A successful DC 5 Listen check is good enough to hear his off-key singing from outside. If hailed, he throws open a window and demands to know who's interrupting his dinner. Krudin starts this encounter with an unfriendly attitude, but if the PCs can make him friendly with a DC 25 Diplomacy or Intimidate check, he'll invite them up to share his meal.

Krudin's stew is simple but tasty. Somewhat starved for companionship, Krudin talks incessantly as the PCs eat, asking them about recent news from Eru Tovar, inquiring about what kind of monsters they've encountered in the marsh so far, and wondering what their reasons for visiting the marsh could be. At the same time, Krudin often glances at his sword, occasionally stroking its blade. If the PCs ask about his sword or make any obvious attempts to examine it, Krudin's attitude immediately switches to unfriendly and he demands the PCs leave his hut at once. If they don't comply, he becomes hostile, rages, and attacks.

Krudin's sword is haunted by the spirit of the soldier who last owned it. As a result, the sword has become cursed. The curse has driven Krudin insane; he is obsessed with the sword and takes pains to keep it well-polished and safe from harm.

Krudin, male human barbarian 4: CR 4; Medium humanoid; HD 4d12+12; hp 42; Init +2; Speed 40 ft.; AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +4; Grp +7; Atk or Full Atk +5 melee (2d6+13/19–20, *+1 cursed greatsword* with 4-point Power Attack); SA rage 2/day; SQ fast movement, illiteracy, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge; AL CG; SV Fort +7, Ref +3, Will –2; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 12 (currently 5 from curse), Cha 8.

Skills: Climb +5, Craft (carpentry) +7, Jump +13, Knowledge (nature) +3, Survival +4, Swim +10.

Feats: Athletic, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greatsword).

Languages: Common.

Rage: hp 50; AC 13, touch 10, flat-footed 11; Grp +9; Atk or Full Atk +7 melee (2d6+16/19–20, *+1 cursed greatsword* with 4-point Power Attack); SV Fort +9, Will +0; Str 20, Con 20; Climb +7, Jump +15, Swim +12.

Possessions: Masterwork studded leather, *+1 cursed greatsword*, healer's kit, dried meat and fruit (enough to feed one person for a week), flint and steel, waterskin, homemade rope (100 ft.), whetstone, pouch of 58 gp and 10 sp.

Tactics: Krudin's first action in combat is to rage. Thereafter, he attacks the PC that provoked him until either he or the PC is dead. He uses Power Attack every round to deal an extra 8 points of damage. He keeps attacking with his greatsword until there are no obvious targets within 30 feet, at which point he immediately calms down and goes back to eating and cleaning his sword. If disarmed of his cursed sword, Krudin's tactics change; he does his best to reclaim the sword and continues the attack only once it's back in his grip.

Treasure: Krudin's *+1 greatsword* is cursed—it fills its owner with an obsession for keeping the sword clean and safe, forcing the character to become selfishly possessive about the item. Each day, the owner must make a DC 20 Will save or suffer 1 point of Wisdom drain. This drain cannot lower the victim's Wisdom below 5.

Development: If the PCs are able to maintain a peaceful rapport with Krudin, he can provide them with some useful information. The following list of hints should be given to the PCs if they ask the right questions.

- If the PCs need to re-supply or need potions, they should talk to Slurrozh, the potion maker.
- Krudin knows that scrags live in Cold Stones Keep, and some sort of creepy vine monster lurks in the southeastern tower.
- If asked for directions to a location, Krudin can give the PCs a list of landmarks that grants a +2 circumstance bonus on Survival checks to avoid becoming lost when traveling to that location.

It's unlikely that a group of 4th-level PCs can free Krudin from his curse, since doing so requires a *break enchantment* or *remove curse* spell. If they free him of his curse, though, he recommends that they bury the cursed sword in the swamp somewhere. In any event, he is so grateful to the PCs that he offers his services to them as a guide or guardian for the remainder of the adventure.

Ad-Hoc Experience Award: Award XP normally if the PCs defeat Krudin in combat. Alternately, if the PCs manage to defeat Krudin without killing him and free him from the sword's curse, award them the same amount of XP.

The Potion Maker's Hovel (EL 7)

A small island surrounded by large hedgerows protrudes from the tangles of the marsh. A massive tree larger than any other you've seen so far dominates the island, and cradled within its branches is an ancient-looking hut.

As with Zarlag's hut, a rope ladder provides access to this hut. Unlike Zarlag's hut, this structure seems ramshackle and unsafe. Patches, extensions, and mismatched repairs are evident, and the whole building constantly creaks and shakes.

Creatures: This is the home of a wizened human cleric named Slurrozh. She makes a modest living selling and bartering potions to local humanoids. Once a priestess of Boccob, she was excommunicated from the church in distant Verbobonc for her heretical beliefs that magic existed before Boccob. She now follows no formal religion, drawing power and spiritual enlightenment from the surrounding marsh itself in a matter similar to a druid.

If she notices the PCs' approach, Slurrozh watches from her hut, hailing them when they reach the edge of her islet, demanding to know their business. She starts this encounter with an indifferent attitude. If the PCs flatter her, they gain a +2 circumstance bonus on the Diplomacy check.

By changing her attitude to at least friendly with a DC 15 Diplomacy or Intimidate check, Slurrozh agrees to let the PCs examine the potions, goods, and information she has on sale. The potions she currently has for sale are listed below in Treasure. She also offers any of her

prepared spells for sale, providing a list if the PCs inquire. Given time, she can also prepare spells on request. She has a soft spot in her heart for Krudin, and if he is brought to her and the PCs ask her to prepare a *remove curse* to save him, she does so for free.

If asked for information, Slurrozh charges 1 gp per question. She can provide advice on how to fight most of the denizens of the Cold Marshes. Perhaps more importantly, she saw the Fingers of Iuz pass by while she was out gathering herbs for her potions. The latter visited here the day before on their way to Cold Stones Keep. She also knows a lot about the dangerous weather of the Cold Marshes. However, her information has a cost whether it is barter or coin. She is a shrewd negotiator, opportunistic, and greedy. She would send the PCs away in their undergarments and lose no sleep over it.

Slurrozh the Potion Maker, female human cleric 5: CR 5; Medium humanoid; HD 5d8+10 plus 3; hp 35; Init +1; Speed 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 11, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +3; Grp +3; Atk or Full Atk +3 melee (1d8/×3, spear) or +5 ranged (1d8/19–20, masterwork light crossbow); SA spells, turn undead; SQ —; AL CN; SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +7; Str 10, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 16, Cha 8.

Skills: Craft (alchemy) +9, Heal +13, Knowledge (nature) +7, Survival +9 (+11 in aboveground natural environments).

Feats: Brew Potion, Self-Sufficient, Toughness.

Languages: Common, Gnoll.

Cleric Spells Prepared (5/4+1/3+1/1+1; Save DC 12 + spell level): 0—*create water, mending, purify food and drink* (2), *read magic*; 1st—*bane, cause fear* (DC 14), *detect undead, endure elements* (already cast), *entangle* (DC 14)[D]; 2nd—*barkskin*[D], *bear's endurance, lesser restoration, spiritual weapon* (+6 melee, spear); 3rd—*remove disease, water breathing*[D], *water walk*.

D: Domain spell. *Domains*: Plant (rebuke/command plant creatures 4/day); Water (turn/destroy fire creatures and rebuke, command, or bolster water creatures 4/day).

Possessions: *Padded armor +1*, quarterstaff, masterwork light crossbow with 20 bolts, *wand of detect magic* (20 charges), healer's kit, traveler's outfit, wooden holy symbol (a clutch of dried marsh flowers), copper key to potion box, 78 gp.

Treasure: Slurrozh maintains an excellent alchemical lab worth 500 gp. Beneath one of her worktables is an iron box fitted with a good lock (Open Lock 30). It contains the following potions, all of which are for sale: four *potions of endure elements*, two *potions of cure light wounds*, a *potion of shield of faith +2*, two *potions of cure moderate wounds*, a *potion of lesser restoration*, a *potion of water breathing*, and two *potions of water walk*.

Ghoul Bridge (EL 5)

A ten-foot-wide, thirty-foot-long stone bridge covered in lichen and moss arches across an expanse of slow-moving murky water. It seems completely out of place here, as there are no signs of buildings or even a road nearby. Time-weathered gargoyles keep silent vigil at each of the bridge's four corners. The bridge's low rails are decorated every few feet by badly eroded busts, their features worn smooth and unrecognizable.

This bridge's original purpose was to lure undead to this location. Built by a long-dead necromancer, the choice of bridge was a metaphor, intended to symbolize the bridge between life and death that exists in undeath. The necromancer died before he completed the bridge, but enough necromantic energy remains within that local undead find the place soothing to their festering flesh.

Creatures: A group of six lacedons have been the bridge's caretakers for many years now, and their presence is largely responsible for the location's current name. The lacedons hide in the water under the bridge, anxiously waiting for living creatures to cross over.

Lacedon (6): hp 13; *Monster Manual* 119.

Tactics: The lacedons wait for the PCs to reach the middle of the bridge. When they do, the lacedons swarm over the rails to try to surround them. A lacedon that paralyzes a PC attempts to drag its victim into the water where it can feast. While the lacedons are in the water, they benefit from improved cover (+4 to AC, +8 to Reflex saves) against foes on land.

Treasure: In the weeds near the far side of the bridge (Search DC 25) lies a *brooch of shielding* (80 hp left), lost by a previous victim.

Development: If the PCs destroy the six lacedons lurking here, the bridge's magic attracts 1d6 more per day until another group of six dwell in the nearby waters.

CHAPTER TWO: COLD STONES KEEP

From the swirling waters of the misty bog ahead rises a ruined keep, its walls choked with thick vines and moldy growths. One end has partially sunken into the swamp, causing the entire structure to list to the south. A pair of tilted towers and a gatehouse dominates its southern half, while it appears that the keep proper occupies the northern reaches.

Cold Stones Keep has perhaps only a few more years of life before its failing foundations cause the entire southern half to crumble. The keep itself tilts at a 5° slope to the south, yet the ground level on the northern end is barely 2 feet above the surface of the surrounding bog. The southernmost portion is submerged under 9 feet of water.

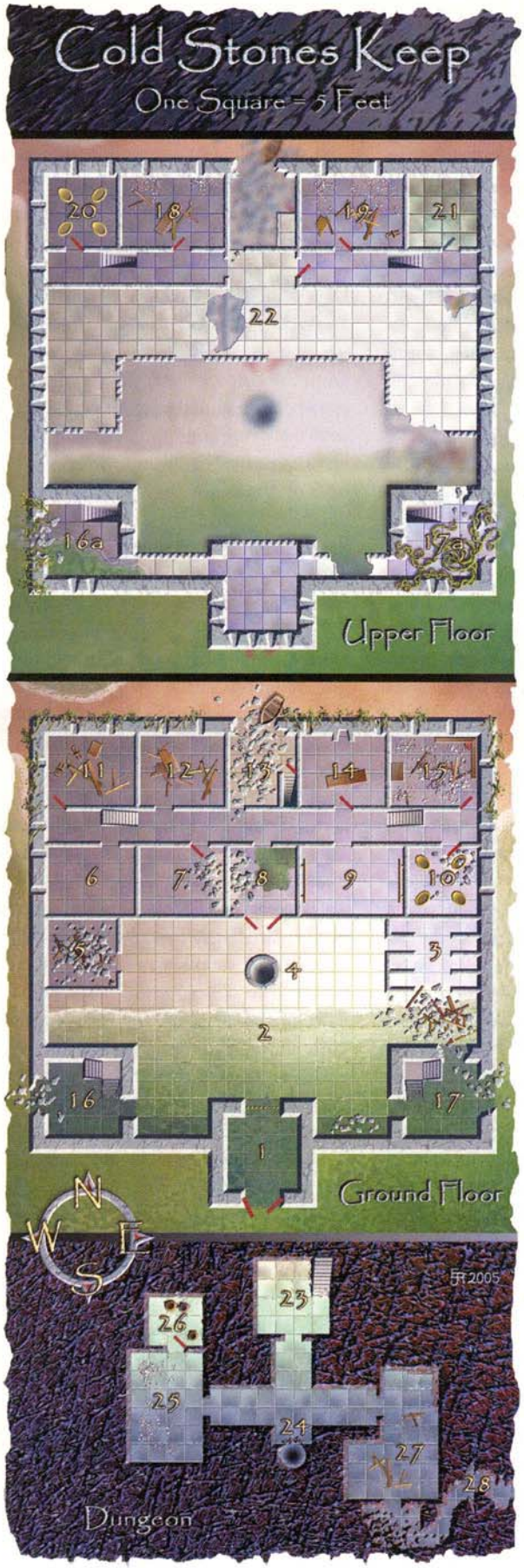
The keep itself is composed of granite blocks. The flagstones are uneven, allowing pools of brackish water to form in places. The doors are in bad condition, their hinges rusty, the wood warped. Windows in the keep proper are 1-ft. by 5-ft. slits. Arrow slits penetrate the walls in other areas. The ceilings are 10 feet high. Light comes from the narrow windows or breaks in the walls and ceiling during the day, but at night the place is unlit. Water in flooded areas is calm, with moss and algae floating on its surface.

Typical Wooden Door: 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 10; Break DC 13.

Typical Exterior Wall: 5 ft. thick; Hardness 8; hp 225; Break DC 45; Climb DC 15.

Typical Interior Wall: 1 ft. thick; Hardness 8; hp 90; Break DC 35; Climb DC 15.

Uneven Flagstones: If a character runs or charges in the keep, he must make a DC 10 Balance check. Failure by 5 or more means the character has fallen prone.



Flooded Rooms: Visibility underwater is 30 feet, assuming good lighting. Although the waters are calm (DC 10 Swim check to navigate), they are near freezing, and can cause hypothermia quite quickly.

The keep's current occupants consist of a gang of scrags and a few other creatures that stay out of each other's way. The Fingers of Iuz are also present in the keep when the PCs arrive; they start in area **21**, but as time goes on they continue to explore the upper reaches of the keep. If they notice the PCs, they abandon their current tasks and prepare to attack as detailed in the Appendix.

1. Sunken Gatehouse

The heavy wooden doors of the gatehouse are wedged open, rotten and sodden with water. In the gloomy interior, the top of an iron portcullis hangs rusted in place.

The gatehouse doors are deeply wedged and won't budge with less than a DC 28 Strength check. The water level is 9 ft. deep, nearly reaching the top of the 10-ft.-high arched opening. The scrags bent the bars of the portcullis, so they can squeeze through with a little effort. Medium and smaller creatures can pass through with ease.

Light filters down through murder holes in the ceiling about 6 feet above the water's surface.

2. Flooded Bailey (EL 5)

More than half of this bailey is filled with stagnant swamp water. Beyond this flooded portion, a crumbling well occupies the center of the bailey just south of a pair of open doors flanking the entrance to the keep proper. A stable occupies the corner to the northeast with another building across from it in the northwest.

A balcony missing parts of its crumbling banister overlooks this area. It is has collapsed entirely where it overhangs the stable, filling the area below with dense rubble.

Creature: A scrag naps in a pool of water in the rubble between the stable and tower. As the PCs enter this area, the scrag makes a Listen check with a –10 penalty to hear the PCs and awaken.

Scrag (1): hp 63; *Monster Manual* 247.

Tactics: The scrag attempts to sneak through the submerged portion of the rubble heap out into deeper parts of the flooded bailey. It hides in the water until a PC comes within 15 feet, and then attacks. It won't venture far from the pool, as it only regenerates when it's in water.

Treasure: The scrag wears a string of pearls around its wrist looted from a past meal. The necklace is worth 600 gp. One of the pearls is actually a *pearl of power* (1st-level).

3. Ruined Stables

The large southern doors to this stable have collapsed, while the smaller door in the west wall hangs crookedly from one rusted

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hinge. Inside lurks the stench of old dung and decaying plants.

While the PCs explore the stable, the walls and ceiling groan and creak ominously, but the structure itself is in no real danger of collapsing.

4. Ruined Well

The rim of this well is broken and crumbling. Water dribbles from a gaping hole in its side about ten or fifteen feet down the shaft.

The bottom of this well collapsed years ago. The hole in the side of the shaft connects to the flooded dungeon below (see area **24**).

Development: The actual bottom of the well is 100 feet down. The original bottom collapsed into a deep cavity, where water from the surrounding marsh now pools and drains into tiny fissures under a pile of rubble.

5. Jakes (EL 2)

The door to this building is missing. A chaotic jumble of broken boards and beams clutters the shadowy area within.

This building served as a common privy during the keep's heyday. Eight 1-ft.-diameter shafts descend 10 feet into a large cesspool, allowing waste to drain into the surrounding bog. The building is filled with dense rubble.

Creature: A swarm of swamp rats has infested this filthy building. Disturbing the rubble by moving through or searching it brings them swarming out to attack the nearest character.

Rat Swarm (1): 13 hp; *Monster Manual* 239.

6. Dead Gnoll

Narrow windows in the west wall are choked with thick vines that do little to cut down the room's draftiness. In one window is wedged the frozen, partially eaten body of a gnoll, its face twisted in horror.

This unfortunate gnoll got stuck in the window several days ago when it tried to squeeze through into this room to escape a particularly large and grizzled crested felldrake it riled up on a hunting trip. The felldrake ate what portions of the gnoll it could reach from the outside of the keep, then moved on.

Treasure: Lying on the ground below the gnoll is a masterwork longsword, and the masterwork chain shirt it wears is still serviceable (although it could use a good cleaning).

7. Collapsing Ceiling (EL 2)

The door to this room is ajar. Piles of rubble lie heaped on the floor under a large hole in the ceiling, which is open to the sky.

The rubble blocks the door, but it's only a DC 13 Strength check to push the door the rest of the way open. Of course, doing so causes the rubble to shift, as detailed below in the Trap.

Trap: The door's frame is all that's currently supporting a large section of the rotten ceiling beams and bricks above. If the door is pushed open, a cascade of rubble tumbles down on anyone within 5 feet of the door.

Collapsing Ceiling: CR 2; mechanical; touch trigger; repair reset; Atk +12 melee (2d6, falling bricks); multiple targets (all targets in two adjacent 5-ft. squares); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 20.

8. Entering the Keep Proper (EL 4)

Stout double doors hang open on rusty hinges in the southern wall of this room. A large pile of rubble clogs the western half of the room, climbing upward to a hole in the ceiling above. A glistening puddle of green filth lies in the eastern portion of the room.

The rubble heap in this room is much more stable than the adjoining heap in area **7**, but it still could shift if clambered upon. A successful DC 14 Balance check is required when moving over the slippery rubble. Failure by 5 or more indicates the character slips and falls, rolling down into the puddle to the east.

Unfortunately, this "puddle" is actually a swath of green slime that has adapted to outdoor growth—natural sunlight has no effect on this particular strain of green slime, but spells that create sunlight (or its equivalent) can still destroy it. This dangerous dungeon hazard is detailed on page 76 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. The pool counts as one single patch of slime.

9. Empty Armory

This appears to have once been an armory. Rusty bolts hold a pair of wooden racks to the east and west walls. A battered steel buckler is all that remains.

The buckler is ruined; interlopers looted the armory long ago.

10. Downstairs Bath (EL 3)

The door to this room hangs halfway open, slightly askew on its hinges. Bits of collapsed wall behind it prevent it from being opened any further. The room beyond contains four copper bathtubs.

Trap: The floor of this room is very weak. A single Medium or larger creature (or two Small creatures) entering the room causes the floor to collapse, dumping it and the room's contents into a 10-foot-deep sinkhole.

Collapsing Floor: CR 1; mechanical; location trigger; repair reset; DC 20 Reflex save avoids; 10 ft. deep (1d6, fall); multiple targets (first target in each of two adjacent 5-ft. squares); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 20.

Treasure: The tubs contain algae-covered water, but a successful DC 25 Search check of the southwest basin turns up a diamond ring worth 850 gp.

11. Old Servant's Quarters

Tangles of vines have grown over the outer wall and through the windows of this room. Broken planks and shreds of cloth are all that remain of its furnishings.

This simply furnished room has been ransacked many times. Nothing of value remains within.

12. Return of the Bloodsuckers (EL 4)

Broken bits of furniture litter the room. A pair of bat-like creatures with needlelike proboscises lie dead on the floor near the windows to the north.

Creatures: When the Fingers of Iuz entered here the day before, they were attacked by a flock of stirges nesting in the vines covering the windows. They killed two and drove the others off into the swamp before moving their search upstairs.

Since then, the surviving stirges have returned to their roost. The little terrors lurk in the vines, waiting for approaching food to rouse them from their torpor.

Stirges (7): hp 5 each; *Monster Manual* 236.

Tactics: When the PCs enter, the stirges swarm out of the vines to attack. If at least two of them are slain, any remaining stirges attempt to flee into the marsh for several hours.

13. Ruined Courtyard

A section of the keep's north wall has collapsed, leaving this entire room open to the surrounding bog. Rubble mixed with shards of broken glass fills most of this space. A warped wooden door opens into a small structure in the southeast corner, and a small rowboat sits near the open wall, tied to a large rock.

The boat belongs to the Fingers of Iuz. A successful DC 19 Search check is enough to notice a number of human tracks in the rubble of this room. A character with the Track feat who makes a DC 19 Survival check can tell that the tracks belong to six humanoid creatures, and that they moved south out of this room and into the hall, whereupon they moved into area **12** and then up the nearby stairs.

The door is swollen shut, and quite a bit sturdier than most other doors in the keep. It must be bashed open if the PCs wish to move beyond it. It blocks a flight of stairs that leads down to area **23**.

Typical Wooden Door: 3 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 20; Break DC 22.

14. Hall of the Necromancer's Wolves (EL 4)

A massive stone table squats heavily in the center of this room. The table appears to have slid somewhat to the south due to the structure's listing. A fireplace is built into the north wall. A humanoid skeleton in tattered rags sits with its back to the wall, leaning against the fireplace. The skeletons of four large dogs lie in heaps around it, as if guarding their master even in death.

The humanoid skeleton was once Blaskin the Dark, a necromancer from Blackmoor. He came across Cold Stones Keep while exploring the marsh and determined to claim the ruin as his own, bringing his four favorite skeletal wolves with him as guardians. Unfortunately, he neglected to plan properly for the journey, and was suffering from hypothermia by the time he reached the keep. He huddled up in here and tried to light a fire in the fireplace, but his frozen fingers failed him and he perished not long thereafter.

Creatures: The four dog-like skeletons around Blaskin's body are in fact his still-animated wolf skeleton minions. Their last instructions were to protect him. Approaching the corpse causes the wolf skeletons to rise up and attack.

Wolf Skeletons (4): hp 13; *Monster Manual* 226.

Tactics: The wolf skeletons attack until the PCs leave the room. The four split into pairs when they fight; one pair moving around the western side of the table and the other around the eastern side. They do not pursue intruders out of the room.

Treasure: A ruined spell component pouch sits near Blaskin's skeleton. The components within are spoiled, but a silver scroll case inside contains a note and a stubby *wand of charm monster* with only 3 charges left. The note is written in Draconic and says, "Blaskin—this wand of charms may aid you in your mission. Enimeb-D'neirf. Good luck!"

A successful DC 20 Knowledge (arcana) suggests that the strange phrase at the end of the note is the wand's command word.

15. Kitchen

Broken, rusty cutlery and smashed crockery litter the floor. A large ruined stove lies in a heap against the west wall.

This room was once the keep's kitchen. It contains nothing of value.

16. Southwest Tower

The base of this tower is submerged in the stagnant water. Only the upper portion of the entrance in the east wall is visible. The door is gone, leaving this bottom level flooded, and empty barrels bob silently on the water's surface. A slippery flight of stairs rises up to the floor above.

The barrels contain hundreds of warped and rotting arrows. The stairs lead to an upper floor that once served as a guard tower (area **16a**). Although the entire tower leans precariously and groans and creaks ominously when creatures move around inside it, it's in no danger of collapsing yet.

17. Winterdew Horror (EL 5)

The bottom portion of this tower is flooded and choked with thick, brown plant roots that wind down a slippery-looking staircase in the corner. Below, the floor is obscured by thick, grimy swamp waters that have flooded the place.

There's nothing on the ground floor of any real interest. The upper floor (area **17a**) is a riot of vegetation. A huge, strange plant grows in the room. Part fungus, part fern, the massive plant consists of an insane tangle of vines, dark green fronds, and pale yellow spore pods. A large number of bowl-shaped leaves filled with clear liquid sit near the plant's base; some of these leaves are closed tightly shut, almost like a fist gripping a coin. The plant's roots cling to the walls and floor, and even wind down to the flooded waters below along the staircase. The whole thing smells sickly-sweet, like a rotting corpse in a field of wildflowers. Movement through the room is impeded

by the plant's roots, which should be treated as dense rubble. A successful DC 24 Knowledge (nature) check identifies the plant as a winterdew, a relatively rare type of plant that is often found growing in frigid ruined buildings. The winterdew is a passively carnivorous plant, and what nutrients it can't gain from bog waters or the sun it supplements by catching rats and other small animals in the bowl-shaped leaves around its base. When the animal tries to drink the sickly sweet liquid in the plant's bowls, the leaf contracts around the animal, which quickly discovers the "water" in the bowl is actually a digestive enzyme. Although unusual and perhaps a bit creepy, a winterdew isn't actually a plant monster, and poses no danger to creatures larger than Tiny sized. The true danger in this room comes from something else entirely.

Creature: The winterdew isn't the only carnivorous plant dwelling here; the room is also home to a particularly vicious vine horror, a sentient colony of algae capable of assuming a roughly humanoid shape. This much more dangerous plant spends much of its time in a sloppy heap among the winterdew's roots and tendrils, but it often leaves the keep to hunt for food in the surrounding marsh. There's a 35% chance that the vine horror is out hunting when the PCs reach this room; in this case, you should have the vine horror encounter them elsewhere in the keep as it returns from its hunt. This vine horror uses the elite array for its ability scores, so its CR is one higher than normal.

Exceptional Vine Horror: CR 5; Medium plant (aquatic); HD 5d8+30; hp 56; Init +1; Speed 30 ft., swim 20 ft.; AC 19, touch 11, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +3; Grp +9; Atk +9 melee (1d8+6 slam); Full Atk +9 melee (1d8+6, 2 slams); SA animate vines; SQ damage reduction 5/bludgeoning, malleability, plant traits; AL NE; SV Fort +10, Ref +2, Will +3; Str 22, Dex 12, Con 23, Int 9, Wis 15, Cha 8; *Fiend Folio* 185.

Skills: Hide +1 (+16 in swamps or in areas with noticeable concentrations of algae), Listen +4, Spot +4, Swim +18.

Feats: Alertness, Improved Natural Attack (slam).

Languages: Sylvan.

Animate Vines (Sp): A vine horror can use this ability to animate any single vine or similar kind of plant life within 90 feet An animated vine fights as an assassin vine in all respects (*Monster Manual* 20). An animated vine loses its ability to fight if the vine horror that animated it is incapacitated or moves out of range.

Malleability (Ex): The vine horror's unusual body structure allows it to compress its body enough to squeeze through a 1-in.-wide crack. Cracks and similar openings that are 1 inch or more in width do not slow the vine horror at all.

Tactics: The vine horror allows PCs to enter and begin searching the room for a few rounds, watching from its hiding place among the plant's roots (it gains a +15 bonus on Hide checks in this room). After a moment, it animates one of the winterdew's vines to attack the closest PC. The vine horror slithers through a crack in the floor down to area **16** to attack any PCs lingering down there, hoping to split the party's resources between the tower's two floors.

Treasure: The vine horror's eating habits involve dragging food back to this room to eat and disposing of the body by stuffing the remains out a window for local scavengers to finish off (and, coincidently, serving as bait for future meals). Some items of value have dropped off its previous victims, but are covered by the algae and plant matter. A successful DC 20 Search check in the room turns up 100 gp, 25 sp, and a gem-studded quiver worth 500 gp that contains 11 *+2 arrows*.

18. Ruined Bedroom

What may have once been a finely appointed chamber is now empty except for pieces of broken furniture and other ruined décor. A large window casing appears to have once held a stained glass window. Shards of colored glass litter the floor nearby.

This once fine bedroom is now in ruins; there is little of interest to be found here. A successful DC 15 Search check reveals that the room's contents have been searched recently (the Fingers of Iuz are responsible for this).

19. Recent Campsite

This room's original use remains unclear, but someone now appears to be using it as a campsite. Six bedrolls lie on the stone floor, and a slightly smoldering campfire sits under one of the narrow windows in the north wall.

The Fingers of Iuz use this ancient bedroom as a campsite. They carry all of their valuables with them, so nothing of any real interest can be found here when they're elsewhere in the keep.

20. Upstairs Bath (EL 1)

The narrow windows of this room are densely filled with creeping vines that even cover portions of the interior walls. Four copper tubs loom in the shadows, and water pools in the center of the room from a leaky ceiling.

Trap: Much like the floor of the downstairs bath, the floor here is weakened and unstable. A single Medium or larger (or two Small creatures) entering the room causes the floor to collapse, dumping it and the room's contents into area **11** below.

Collapsing Floor: CR 1; mechanical; location trigger; repair reset; DC 20 Reflex save avoids; 10 ft. deep (1d6, fall); multiple targets (first target in each of two adjacent 5-ft. squares); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 20.

21. The Vault (EL 8)

The rusted iron door to this room stands partially open. Beyond is a windowless chamber that appears to be lined with lead. ruined chests and other containers lie scattered haphazardly around the room.

This room stored the valuables of the keep's residents and kept them safe from scrying. Medium creatures can squeeze through the opening while smaller creatures can pass through easily. Forcing the door open further requires a DC 28 Strength check.

Creatures: The Fingers of Iuz have just began searching this room when the PCs

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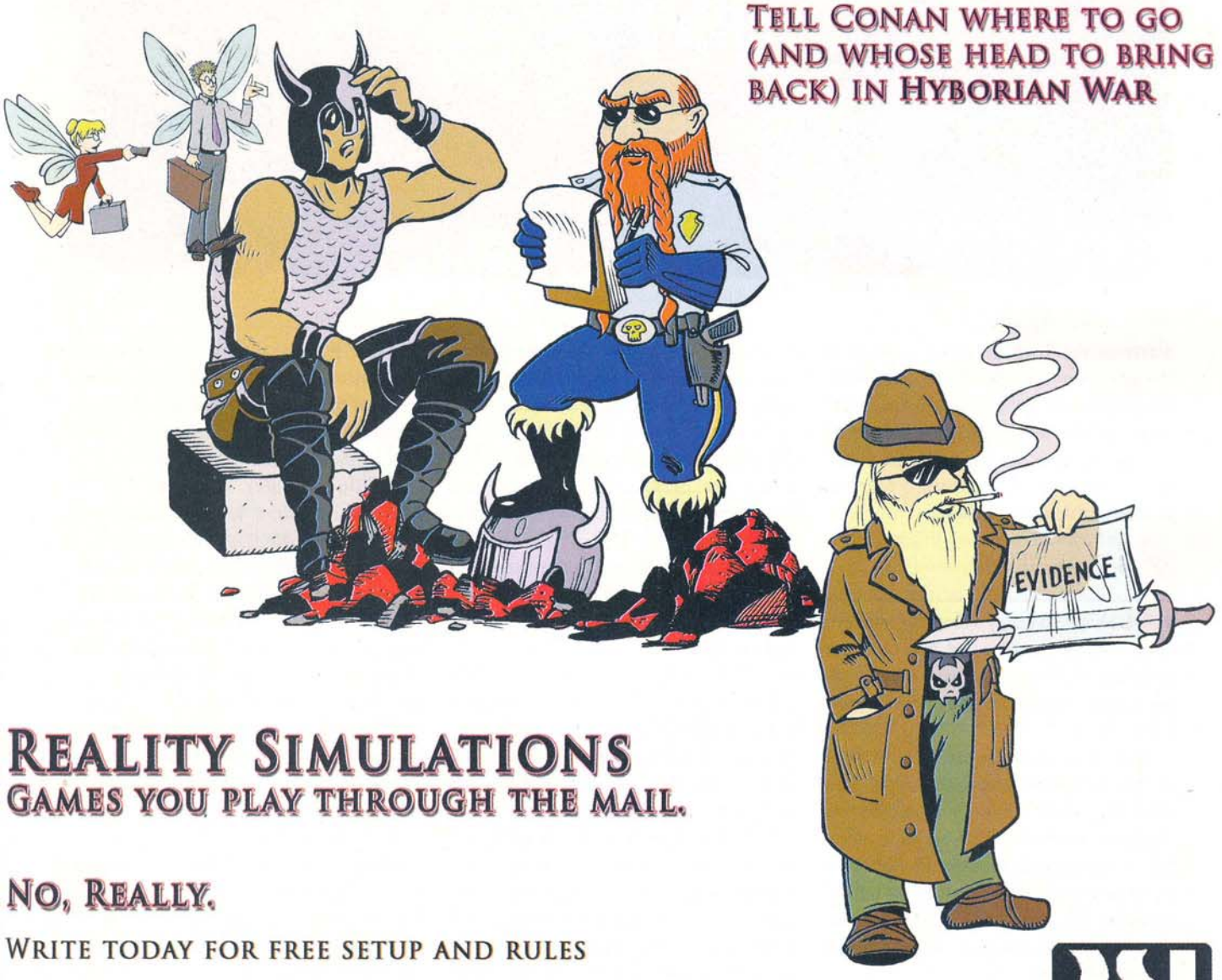

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arrive at the keep. As the PCs explore the keep, the Fingers of Iuz do as well. Eventually, one group should notice the other and the inevitable result should be conflict. Consult the Appendix for statistics for the Fingers of Iuz and a timeline of their activities in the keep.

22. Balcony (EL 1)

This U-shaped balcony affords an excellent view of the surrounding bog, the courtyard, and the bailey. Parts of the balcony have collapsed onto the uneven flagstones below.

Trap: The balcony can support the weight of several creatures, as long as none are larger than Medium and no two creatures are within 5 feet of each other. If two Medium or four Small creatures stand within 5 feet of each other on the balcony, the squares they stand upon crumble, dumping those creatures down into area 4 below.

Collapsing balcony: CR 1; mechanical; location trigger; repair reset; DC 20 Reflex save avoids; 10-ft. drop (1d6, fall); Search DC 20.

23. Flooded Storeroom (EL 3)

Bits of debris, algae, and bubbles float lazily on the surface of the shallow water that floods this chamber. The walls and ceiling are sloped toward the south, the water deepening in a flooded hallway there.

Although it is only a few inches deep in the north half of this room, the water deepens to approximately 3 feet at the archway and floods the dungeon nearly to the ceiling at area 24.

Creature: The "bubbles" that dance on the water's surface here are actually hundreds of creatures floating in the water. This is a bloodbloater swarm, a mass of tiny disk-shaped oozes with bulges at their center. The swarm attacks the first PC that enters the water. The bloodbloaters pursue creatures that try to leave to the south, but do not attack creatures that approach from the south until they enter this room.

Bloodbloater Swarm: CR 1; Diminutive ooze (aquatic, swarm); HD 2d10+12; hp 22; Init +1; Speed 5 ft., swim 30 ft.; AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +1; Grp –11; Atk or Full Atk swarm (1d6 plus blood drain); Space/Reach 10 ft./0 ft.; SA blood drain, distraction (DC 10); SQ amphibious, blindsight 60 ft., ooze traits, swarm traits, vulnerability to fire; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +1, Will –5; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 22, Int —, Wis 1, Cha 1; *Fiend Folio* 16.

Skills: Swim +8.

Blood Drain (Ex): On each round that a bloodbloater swarm deals at least 1 point of damage to a victim, it also drains blood and causes 1 point of Strength damage.

Shplizzmak

24. Scrag Dam (EL 6)

The water rises almost to the ten-foot-high ceiling here. In the south wall, a crude dam of stones and other debris fills a wide fissure that appears to lead out to a hole in the side of the well in the bailey above.

When the southern portion of the keep's foundation collapsed, part of the wall between the well and this hall crumbled. The flooded dungeon began draining as water gushed through the fissure into the well. Shplizzmak ordered the construction of the dam so the dungeon would remain at least partially flooded, and now, though water slowly drains from it, the dungeon stays comfortably flooded for the aquatic trolls.

If the dam is dismantled, the water immediately drains into the well. All creatures in the dungeon are carried at a speed of 20 ft. toward the pit; a successful DC 15 Swim check is required to resist the current. Any creature that is pulled into the well plummets 100 feet to the frothing waters below for 2d3 nonlethal damage and 6d6 lethal damage. Treat this event as a CR 6 hazard.

25. Scrag Nest (EL 6)

Half-eaten fish and bits of rubbish float atop the surface of the water of this flooded room. A rusty iron door hangs from hinges in the north wall.

The water in this room is 6 feet deep.

Creatures: This is the main scrag lair. Three scrags dwell in Cold Stones Keep, not including their leader Shplizzmak. At any one time, one of the scrags can be found in area **2**, another is out in the marsh hunting for food, and the third can be found lurking here. If the PCs remain in the keep for more than a day, the third scrag returns.

Scrag (1): hp 63; *Monster Manual* 247.

Tactics: The scrag tries to deal with intruders herself, as she is somewhat afraid of Shplizzmak. She tries to escape to area **27** and Shplizzmak's protection only if reduced to 15 or fewer hit points.

26. Fish Storage

Several barrels full of rancid fish float on the surface of the water flooding this foul-smelling room.

The barrels of fish were captured a few weeks ago by one of the scrags, who happened upon a hermit's hut deep in the Cold Marsh. After killing the hut's hapless inhabitant, the scrag stole his winter supply of smoked fish. The scrags now use the slowly rotting fish as emergency food supplies.

27. Shplizzmak's Workroom (EL 7)

A worktable sits against the north wall of this flooded room. Rusty hooks and tools hang on the wall, and a number of water-bloated wooden planks bob on the water's surface to the south, near a large pile of rubble.

Creature: Shplizzmak, the self-appointed leader of the scrags, dwells here. The aquatic troll gained his position as leader not so much due to greater size or skill (although he is somewhat healthier, with more hit points, than the others), but because of his fortuitous discovery several years ago—Shplizzmak is the current owner of *Fiend's Embrace*. Until he found the magic cloak inside a secret cache in this room, he was just another scrag. However, since donning the cloak, he has attained cunning and intellect above the norm for his kind. Others of his ilk fear and respect him as much as they fear and respect the scaled cloak he wears.

Shplizzmak, male scrag: hp 76; SQ fire resistance 10; SV Fort +12, Ref +5, Will +4; Int 10; *Monster Manual* 247.

Possessions: *Fiend's Embrace*.

Tactics: When the PCs enter this room, Shplizzmak reacts immediately by swimming to a position where he can attack multiple PCs. He has no

fear of fire, but won't venture out of water for long.

Treasure: In addition to *Fiend's Embrace*, Schplizzmak has gathered a large stash of treasure he keeps hidden underwater in the southwest corner of the room. Most of this treasure came from victims nabbed by his fellow scrags. The loot consists of 1,003 gp, 1,842 sp, 606 cp, 10 gems worth a total of 1,000 gp, a *+1 light steel shield* with a black flame on its crest, a filthy *cloak of resistance +1*, and a orange crystal *wand of burning hands* (caster level 3, 25 charges).

28. Scrag Tunnel

The rooms that existed beyond this point are now inaccessible, having long since collapsed. All that remains is a tunnel that leads out into the surrounding bog, about 500 feet east of Cold Stones Keep. The scrags use this as the primary entrance and exit to their lair.

APPENDIX: THE FINGERS OF IUZ

The Fingers of Iuz are a band of six mercenaries who serve the interests of Iuz the Old. Unfortunately for them, they haven't had many successes in their mercenary careers, and have yet to attract the attention of Iuz's more powerful minions, to say nothing of the Old One himself. They hope that by recovering *Fiend's Embrace* they'll be able to rectify this situation.

The Fingers of Iuz arrive at Cold Stones Keep the night before the PCs, arriving at area **13** by skiff. They explored areas **7–8** and **11–12** (fighting several stirges in the process) before moving upstairs to camp in area **19**. The next day, they explore areas **18–22**, and when the PCs arrive on the scene they're finishing off area **21** and preparing to move back downstairs. Unless they run into the PCs, they explore the downstairs rooms in reverse numeric order. As they explore these rooms and encounter monsters, you should adjust their resources appropriately.

The Fingers consist of six mercenaries. The de facto leader is "Mistress" Matyara. She has pale blonde hair and scars around her eyes where they were once sewn open to witness her family's murder. Baklunag usually backs her up. He is a tall, thin man formerly of the Wolf Nomads. He wears a fur-trimmed cloak customary of his former kin. Grinag is a hulking brute with a ratty mohawk and body piercings. Roon is missing an ear. He is considered the nice one because he likes to talk to people before killing them. Spike and Valen are very similar, both thin and dexterous with short-cropped hair. Valen sports several prominent tattoos.

These NPCs are suspicious of everyone, even each other. They won't take kindly to the PCs exploring the keep. They may converse with them for a moment, giving Roon a chance to get information from them, but they attack at the first hint of subterfuge or if they learn that the PCs are here for the same reason they are. Alternatively, they may opt to step aside and let the PCs soak up damage from traps and monsters, then attack them once they have the cloak. That's assuming the PCs are too foolish to see this coming.

Once the Fingers of Iuz realize that the PCs are in the keep, their primary purpose shifts from exploration to defense of their claim on the dungeon. Matyara initially sends Roon down to make contact with the group. Although Roon remains polite during this initial contact, his actual purpose is to gauge the PCs' strength and purpose in the dungeon. If he learns that they're here looking for *Fiend's Embrace*, a successful DC 20 Sense Motive check notes his startled expression. In any case, he presents himself as a representative of another group of adventurers who just happened upon the keep and are exploring it as well. He proposes an alliance between his group and the PCs, musing that if they join forces they'll have a better chance of survival against the keep's denizens.

If the PCs agree to join forces, Roon leaves and returns soon with Grinag, Baklunag, and Spike. Matyara and Valen remain hidden, and follow the combined parties quietly, ready to come to the aid of the others if things turn bad. Matyara would like to have the PCs shoulder the brunt of the exploration; and orders the four who "join" the PCs to hang back in combat and let the PCs do most of the work. If all goes well, she and Valen join their fellows once they all defeat the scrags and win *Fiend's Embrace*. Once this occurs, she tries to take the cloak by force; if the PCs resist at this point, she and her mercenaries try to kill them.

Note that, if fought as a group, the six Fingers of Iuz are an EL 8 encounter, and as such can easily overwhelm a party of four 4th-level characters. If several of their members are already wounded after helping the PCs fight scrags and vine horrors and bloodbloaters, the PCs have a better chance of defeating them. Alternately, the PCs could turn the tables on the mercenaries, especially if they deduce what they're really up to. Sense Motive checks used to get hunches during conversations, Sleight of Hand rolls to procure unholy symbols of Iuz, and spells like *detect evil* or *detect thoughts* are all excellent ways the PCs can learn that their new "friends" are trouble.

Matyara, female human cleric 4: CR 4; Medium humanoid; HD 4d8+4 plus 3; hp 25; Init +1; Speed 30 ft.; AC 15, touch 11, flatfooted 14; Base Atk +3; Grp +5; Atk or Full Atk +6 melee (1d4+3/19–20 *+1 dagger*) or +5 ranged (1d8/19–20 masterwork light crossbow); SA spells, rebuke undead; SQ —; AL CE; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +7; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 12.

Skills: Bluff +5, Concentration +8, Hide +7, Knowledge (religion) +3.

Feats: Brew Potion, Quick Draw, Toughness.

Languages: Common.

Cleric Spells Prepared (caster level 4): 0—*cure minor wounds* (2), *detect magic* (2), *light*; 1st—*cure light wounds* (2), *disguise self*[D], *protection from good*, *sanctuary*; 2nd—*cure moderate wounds* (2), *invisibility*[D], *shatter* (DC 15).

D: Domain spell. *Domains*: Chaos (cast Chaos spells at +1 caster level), Trickery (Bluff, Disguise, Hide are class skills).

Possessions: Masterwork chain shirt, *+1 dagger*, masterwork light crossbow with 10 bolts, three *potions of cure light wounds*, *potion of water breathing*, *potion of water walk*, everburning torch, silver unholy symbol of Iuz, backpack, bedroll, cold weather outfit, flint and steel, waterskin.

Baklunag, male human necromancer 3: CR 3; Medium humanoid; HD 3d4+3; hp 12; Init +6; Speed 30 ft.; AC 16 (with *mage armor*), touch 12, flat-footed 14 (with *mage armor*); Base Atk +1; Grp +0; Atk or Full Atk +1 melee (1d4–1, master-

work dagger) or +4 ranged (1d8/19–20, masterwork light crossbow); SA spells; SQ summon familiar; AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +4; Str 9, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 15, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills: Concentration +7, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Knowledge (religion) +8, Knowledge (the planes) +8, Listen +5, Spellcraft +10, Spot +2.

Feats: Alertness (when Morlak is in arm's reach), Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot, Scribe Scroll[B], Spell Focus (necromancy).

Languages: Common, Draconic, Orc.

Wizard Spells Prepared (caster level 3; prohibited schools enchantment and evocation): 0—*detect magic, prestidigitation, read magic, touch of fatigue* (+1 melee touch, DC 13); 1st—*endure elements* (already cast), *mage armor, ray of enfeeblement* (+3 ranged touch), *shield*; 2nd—*blindness/deafness* (DC 15), *invisibility, web* (DC 14).

Spellbook: 0—all except those from the enchantment and evocation schools; 1st—*cause fear, color spray, endure elements, mage armor, magic weapon, ray of enfeeblement, shield, unseen servant*; 2nd—*blindness/deafness, command undead, invisibility, mirror image, web.*

Possessions: Masterwork dagger, masterwork light crossbow with 14 crossbow bolts, *wand of ray of enfeeblement* (44 charges), two *potions of cure light wounds*, *potion of blur*, scroll of *invisibility*, scroll of *shield*, everburning torch, spellbook, spell component pouch, backpack, bedroll, five candles, cold weather outfit, ink (one vial), inkpen, parchment (five sheets), trail rations (five days), waterskin, 5 gp.

Morlak, bat familiar: hp 6; *Monster Manual* 268.

Grinag, male half-orc fighter 3: CR 3; Medium humanoid; HD 3d10+9; hp 30; Init +2; Speed 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +3; Grp +7; Atk +7 melee (1d8+6/×3, masterwork orc double axe with 2-point Power Attack) or +6 ranged (1d8+4/×3, masterwork composite longbow); Full Atk +5 melee (1d8+6/×3, masterwork orc double axe with 2-point Power Attack) and +5 melee (1d8+4/×3, masterwork orc double axe with 2-point Power Attack) or +6 ranged (1d8+4/×3, masterwork composite longbow); SA —; SQ darkvision 60 ft., orc blood; AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +0; Str 18, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 8.

Skills: Climb +8, Swim +8.

Feats: Exotic Weapon Proficiency (orc double axe), Power Attack, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (orc double axe).

Languages: Common, Orc.

Possessions: *+1 chain shirt*, masterwork orc double axe, masterwork composite longbow (+4 Str) with 20 arrows, two *potions of cure light wounds*, antitoxin, five sunrods, bloodstone worth 50 gp, backpack, bedroll, oil (two pints), silk rope, trail rations (10 days), 60 gp, 4 sp.

Roon, male gnome bard 3: CR 3; Small humanoid; HD 3d6+6; hp 19; Init +1; Speed 20 ft.; AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +2; Grp –3; Atk or Full Atk +2 melee (1d3–1/×3, dagger) or +5 ranged (1d6/19–20 masterwork light crossbow); SA *fascinate*, spells, spell-like abilities; SQ bardic knowledge +5, bardic music, countersong, inspire

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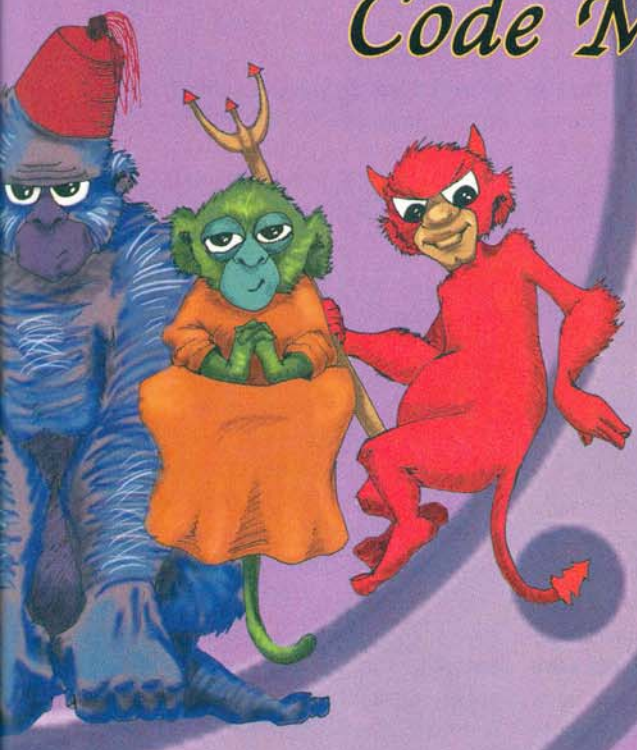

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competence, inspire courage +1, low-light vision; AL CN; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 8, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 16.

Skills: Bluff +9, Concentration +8, Diplomacy +13, Disguise +3 (+5 acting), Intimidate +5, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Listen +2, Perform (song) +9, Sense Motive +8, Spellcraft +10, Use Magic Device +9 (+11 with scrolls).

Feats: Negotiator, Spell Focus (illusion).

Languages: Common, Gnome, Abyssal, Orc.

Bard Spells Known (3/2, caster level 3): 0—*dancing lights, daze* (DC 13), *flare* (DC 13), *light, lullaby* (DC 13), *mage hand*; 1—*cure light wounds, silent image* (DC 16), *sleep* (DC 14).

Spell-like Abilities (caster level 1): 1/day—*dancing lights, ghost sound* (DC 14), *prestidigitation, speak with animals* (burrowing animals only, duration 1 minute).

Possessions: Masterwork studded leather, dagger, masterwork light crossbow with 10 bolts, *Heward's handy haversack, oil of magic weapon*, two *potions of cure light wounds*, bedroll, cold weather outfit, flint and steel, oil (one pint), six torches, trail rations (14 days), waterskin, 50 gp.

Spike, male human fighter 3: CR 3; Medium humanoid; HD 3d10+3; hp 24; Init +2; Speed 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +3; Grp +5; Atk +5 melee (2d6+3/19–20, greatsword) or +7 ranged (1d8+2/×3 masterwork composite longbow); Atk +5 melee (2d6+3/19–20, greatsword) or +5/+5 ranged (1d8+2/×3 masterwork composite longbow); SA —; SQ —; AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +4; Str 14, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +3, Craft (bowmaking) +3, Knowledge (religion) +0, Swim +4.

Feats: Iron Will, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Weapon Focus (composite longbow).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: *+1 chain shirt*, greatsword, masterwork composite longbow (+2 Str) with 20 arrows, 10 silver arrows, two *potions of cure light wounds*, five sunrods, two smokesticks, backpack, bedroll, cold weather outfit, hooded lantern, oil (one pint), silk rope, trail rations (five days), waterskin, 10 pp.

Valen, male human rogue 2/ranger 1: CR 3; Medium humanoid; HD 2d6+4 plus 1d8+2; hp 20; Init +6; Speed 30 ft.; AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +2; Grp +4; Atk or Full Atk +6 melee (1d8+4/19–20, *+1 longsword* wielded two-handed) or +3 melee (1d8+2/×3, composite longbow); SA sneak attack +1d6, favored enemy (humans) +2; SQ evasion, trapfinding, wild empathy +0; AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +0; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 8.

Skills: Climb +6, Disable Device +6, Hide +6, Jump +6, Knowledge (nature) +1, Listen +6, Move Silently +6, Open Lock +6, Search +5, Spot +6, Survival +5.

Feats: Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot, Track[B], Weapon Focus (longsword).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Chain shirt, *+1 longsword*, composite longbow (+2 Str) with 20 arrows, two *potions of cure light wounds*, backpack, bedroll, blue whinnis poison (one dose), bullseye lantern, cold weather outfit, flint and steel, two silk ropes, thieves' tools, trail rations (three days), waterskin, whetstone, 35 gp, 20 sp.

Tactics: The Fingers of Iuz have worked together for many months, and while they might argue at times over how to split treasure or when they're choosing a new job, in combat they are expert tacticians and show no mercy. If a fight breaks out, they typically use the following tactics if possible.

Round 1: Matyara casts *protection from good* and draws her dagger. Baklunag casts *mage armor* on himself and then seeks cover. Grinag moves up to engage the nearest enemy in melee. Roon loads his crossbow and uses inspire courage to give his allies a +1 morale bonus against charms and fear effects and on attack and damage rolls. Spike draws his bow and prepares an action to shoot the next PC who tries to cast a spell, hoping to disrupt the spell. Valen attacks a PC that is flat-footed with his bow; if none are flat-footed he instead flanks a target in melee (most likely the one Grinag is fighting) and uses his longsword to make a sneak attack.

Round 2: Matyara casts *shatter* on the toughest-looking enemy's weapon, moving to stay out of melee if necessary. Baklunag casts *mirror image*. Grinag continues to fight in melee. Roon casts *sleep* so it can affect the most enemies at once; his inspire courage lasts for five more rounds. Spike continues to fire upon spellcasters with his bow. Valen moves in to flank an opponent with Grinag, striking with his longsword to make a sneak attack.

Round 3 and thereafter: Matyara casts *sanctuary* and moves up near her most wounded ally. Baklunag casts *shield* and then uses his wand. Grinag continues his previous actions. Roon casts *sleep* again and then draws his light crossbow. Spike continues to shoot spellcasters or archers, and Valen continues to flank enemies.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Once the PCs have obtained *Fiend's Embrace*, this adventure is essentially over. They still need to make their way back out of the Cold Marshes, but once they get back to civilization they may have a moral dilemma. *Fiend's Embrace* is an evil magic item of considerable power... is it really wise to allow it to re-enter society?

If the PCs deliver the cloak to Arakk, he is shocked and surprised to find just how potent an item the cloak is. He tries to convince the PCs to give him the cloak in exchange for monthly payments of 2,000 gp until the cloak is paid for. Once he has the cloak in his hands, his studies of Iggwilv intensify. He disappears into his secret library for days at a time. Left to his own devices, Arakk may become a dangerous villain later in the campaign. If the PCs agree to let him pay his reward in installments, they only receive their first payment. If the PCs come to collect, he tries to turn them away; if they attack or involve the law, he uses the cloak and his own spells and abilities to fight back as best he can.

If instead the PCs have been hired to intercept the Fingers of Iuz and capture the cloak for the Knights of the Hart, they are awarded with a total of 2,500 gp for their service. In addition, they have earned the friendship of this powerful organization.

If one of the PCs decides to keep the cloak (or if they simply sell the cloak to the highest bidder), the evil artifact slowly corrupts its owner, hoping eventually to return to Iggwilv's possession. In the end, destroying the cloak may well be the wisest option.

Finally, your players may wish to explore more of the Cold Marshes after this adventure. If so, Zarlag's map and journal point out several points of interest you may wish to develop into new adventures.

Fiend's Embrace

This dark red cloak bears a lighter umber-colored lining. It is thick and scaly and radiates a strong aura of evil. Its metal clasp is shaped like a six-fingered hand. While this cloak is worn it provides the following benefits:

- +1 resistance bonus on all saving throws
- +4 enhancement bonus to Intelligence
- Fire resistance 10

Fiend's Embrace is so tainted with evil that it bestows one negative level on any good creature attempting to wear it. The negative level remains as long as the cloak is worn and disappears whenever it is removed. Worse, *Fiend's Embrace* retians a small sliver of intelligence from the pit fiend it was harvested from. The cloak has an Intelligence of 13, a Wisdom of 10, and a Charisma of 13. It communicates via empathy, and has 60-ft. vision and hearing. The cloak is chaotic evil, and has an Ego of 7. The transformation to magic cloak has perverted this shard of intelligence, and now the cloak wants little more than to serve the one it was created for—the witch queen Iggwilv. *Fiend's Embrace* won't rest until it is draped comfortably over its mistress' shapely shoulders once again; until then, it tries to influence its current owner into tracking down Iggwilv, wherever she may be, so she can reclaim her cloak. This influence is subtle. If *Fiend's Embrace* ever wins a personality confilct with its possessor, it allows its owner to retain control of his actions for the most part but infuses him with an obsession with Iggwilv, forcing him to discover her current location (which is left to you to determine).

Moderate abjuration and transmutation; CL 8th; Craft Wondrous Item, *fox's cunning*, *resistance*, *resist energy*; Price: 26,500 gp.

Scaling the Adventure

"Fiend's Embrace" is designed for a group of four 4th-level characters, but it can be adapted for use by 2nd–3rd-level characters or 5th-level characters. All NPCs in the adventure should have their class levels adjusted by an amount equal to the increase or decrease in average party level from 4th. Remember to adjust the amount of treasure and NPC gear accordingly.

2nd–3rd-level Characters: Remove two of the lacedons from the Ghoul Bridge. In area **17a**, remove the vine horror and change the winterdew to an assassin vine. Reduce the number of stirges in area **12** by two. Replace the scrags with 2nd-level warrior aquatic ogres. Finally, remove Spike or Valen from the Fingers of Iuz, so the PCs only have to cope with five enemy NPCs.

5th-level Characters: Replace the lacedons with wights, and replace the stirges in area **12** with five Medium monstrous spiders. The 6-HD crested felldrake that killed the gnoll in area **6** should be encountered somewhere in the keep. Advance the vine horror to 7 HD (which makes it a Large monster). Replace the bloodbloater swarm with an aquatic ochre jelly.

Adapting the Adventure

Although "Fiend's Embrace" is set in the World of Greyhawk, it can be transposed to any Dungeons & Dragons campaign with relative ease. Graz'zt's influnece extends to many worlds, and Iggwilv has traveled throughout the multiverse in her time. She could have given *Fiend's Embrace* away at any time while on any one of countless worlds. The Fingers of Iuz need only have their name changed (perhaps the Fingers of Cyric in the Forgotten Realms, for example; in Eberron they could easilly become agents of the Emerald Claw) in order to be adapted to other campaigns. Finally, if you don't have a vast arctic swampland in your campaign, you can set the adventure in any remote swampland with relative ease; most of the denizens of Cold Stones Keep are not bound to cold environments.

Stephen S. Greer writes, "I live in Las Vegas with my wife, April, and dog Ozzy. When not gaming or painting miniatures, I'm usually at my computer chuckling over some new torment I've concocted for my players. I'd like to thank them for playtesting this module and being my personal Fingers of Iuz."

MOUNT ZOGON
I LEARNED IN DRUID COLLEGE THAT WHEN YOU KILL A ROPER, YOU SHOULD ALWAYS SLICE OPEN ITS STOMACH AND SEARCH FOR GEMS...
glish
ROPERS LOVE TO SWALLOW GEMS!!
AH.
TONYM ©2004
AND ALWAYS CHECK THE INTESTINES NEXT! IT'S EXTRA WORK, BUT OFTEN WORTH THE EFFORT!
GALEENA...? ISN'T THAT A DWARF?
mlok
muk
mluk
YES, BUT I FIGURED THAT... MAYBE...
Hey!! AN EMERALD!!!

BY TONY MOSELEY

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Check out "The Mud Sorcerer's Tomb," the adventure selected as the #1 *Dungeon* adventure by our all-star panel in issue 116's "30 Greatest D&D Adventures."

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What starts out as a dragon slaying mission develops into something far deadlier when the PCs go "Into the Silver Realm."

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Wedding Day (3rd–7th)
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It was just a matter of time before Chris Perkins turned his attention to *Birthright*; check out "Seeking Bloodsilver" for the results.

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The Styes

A line of sunken houses, built on the wrong side of the wall, pressed up against the banks in the water, their bituminous black bricks dripping. Disturbances beneath us. The river boils with eddies from below. Dead fish and frogs that have given up the fight to breathe in this rotting stew....

—China Mieville, *Perdido Street Station*

BY RICHARD PETT
BY JOACHIM BARRUM
BY JASON ENGLE

ANY SETTING | MID-LEVEL (6TH–12TH) | URBAN

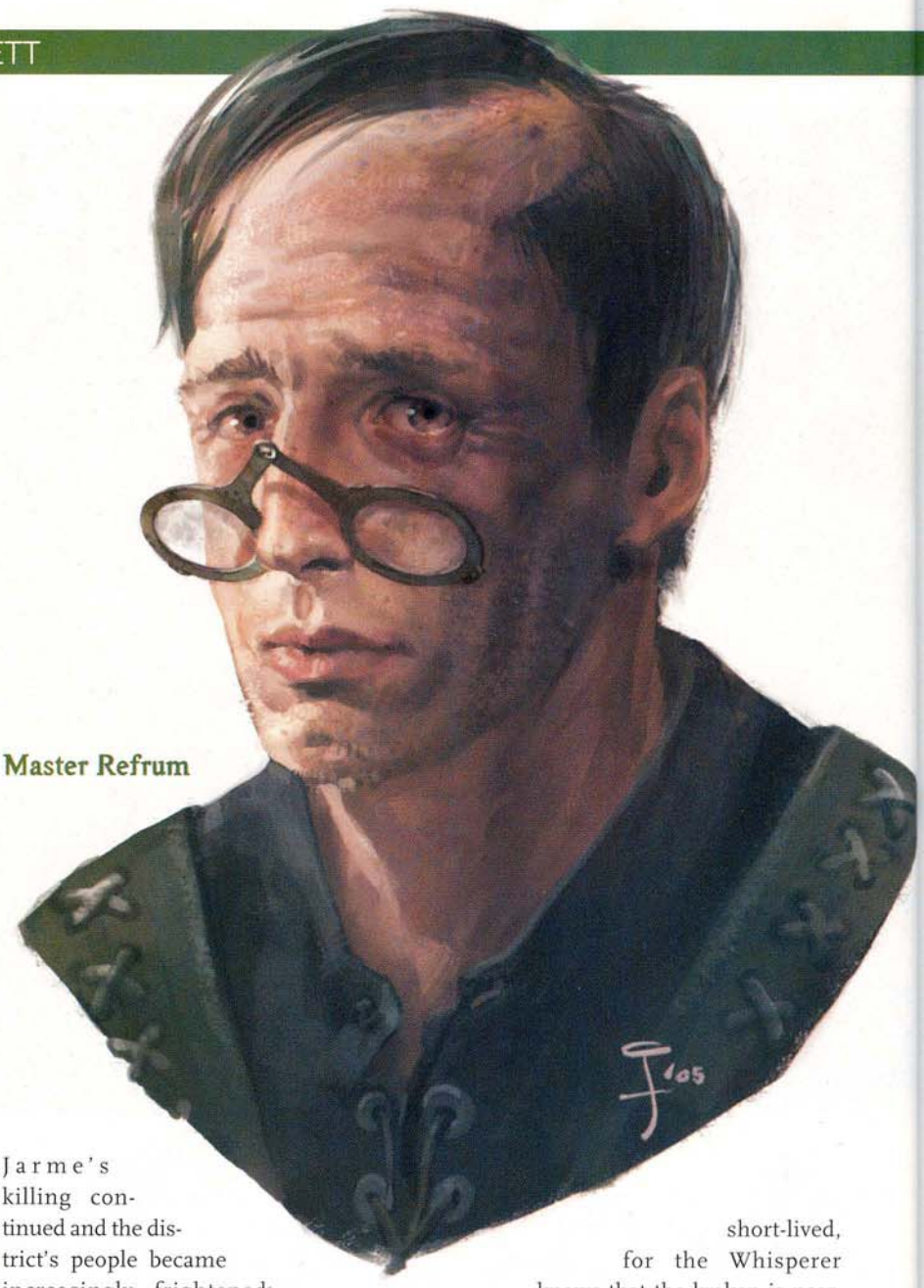
"The Styes" is a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventure suitable for four 9th-level characters. The adventure takes place in the Styes, a district in a large port city in your campaign world. Ideally, this port city is part of a nation that has fallen on hard times. Alternately, it could be part of a free city that has fallen into despair and decay. In the WORLD OF GREYHAWK, the city of Prymp within the lands of Ahlissa is an excellent choice. In the FORGOTTEN REALMS, the Styes fits nicely into the city of Marsember, detailed in *DUNGEON* #113. And in EBERRON, the Styes could exist in any one of the numerous coastal cities (like Rekkenmark) that haven't yet recovered from the ravages of the Last War.

Adventure Background

There exists an underwater abyss known as the Endless Nadir, a haunted place shunned by the aquatic races of the region, for this realm is the lair of a powerful submerged city of aboleths. The alien denizens of this city are, for the most part, content to plot and writhe in the depths of the ocean trench, but some of them are cursed with curiosity. One such creature is Sgothgah, a scholar, crafter, and explorer amongst its kind known as a savant.

Sgothgah's life changed forever when it encountered and consumed a large cult of lunatics who worshiped Tharizdun, the god of madness. Aboleths absorb the memories of those they consume; normally, these memories function simply as stores of knowledge. For some unholy reason, though, the memories of these cultists found purchase in Sgothgah's mind, and they grew like parasites, eventually flowering into something alien and repulsive to most aboleths—religious faith. The aboleth did what it could to hide its faith from others, relocating its lair to the edge of the Endless Nadir and spending more and more time alone. But one fateful day, the aboleth made an amazing discovery. In the inky depths beyond the Endless Nadir, it discovered a young fiendish kraken that bore a mark upon its head—a fleshy mound of black scarred tissue that resembled a symbol. A symbol Sgothgah recognized: the symbol of Tharizdun.

Sgothgah knew this was a sign from Tharizdun, and knew its task was to nurture the kraken to its full growth. Yet it also knew that to do so in the Endless Nadir would expose its faith to its kin; it had already had several close calls with discovery recently. So Sgothgah fled, taking with it loyal skum minions and the young kraken. They headed for shallow waters where men were common, where they hoped they would not be followed and discovered by the other aboleths of the Endless Nadir.



Master Refrum

They came to a place known as the Styes, a wretched shadow of a once glorious port city, now fallen into decay and corruption.

Sgothgah chose a sunken church in the waters west of the Styes as a place to hide the kraken, and its dominated minions and skum thugs have infiltrated many corners of the city. To its great delight Sgothgah discovered a thriving cult of Tharizdun in the Styes. Sponsored secretly by one of the Styes' own ruling Councilmen, a loathsome creature named Dory, this cult of Tharizdun had thrived in the diseased city for decades. Sgothgah used its skum minions and its ability to communicate with dominated victims via their dreams to forge an alliance with the cultists, hiding its true identity so that its enemies from the Endless Nadir could not find it. The cultists know Sgothgah only as "The Whisperer," and they quickly came to regard their hidden ally as a powerful messenger of Tharizdun. Only their powerful sponsor, Mr. Dory, suspects the truth.

As Sgothgah's new cultist allies began supplying captured beggars, drunks, prostitutes, and indigents that no one would miss to satisfy the kraken's ravenous hunger, the Whisperer constructed a huge and elaborate glyph around the pit the kraken now used as a lair. Drawing upon thousands of years of memories and glyph-lore, the Whisperer fashioned the glyph to capture the latent emotional energy of those dwelling in the Styes. The glyph absorbed fear, depression, despair, and anger and focused them into the pit, enhancing and accelerating the kraken's growth. Yet even then, the creature wasn't growing fast enough for Sgothgah. The aboleth set out to increase the output of these emotions from the Styes, and began looking for a proxy for the next stage of its plan.

Jarme Loveage was a fisherman in the Styes, and as ill luck would have it, he was the one chosen by the Whisperer. Jarme's great physical strength made him an ideal tool for the Whisperer, who dominated him through his dreams and forced him to commit brutal murders every week. Jarme carried a lantern on his grisly nocturnal harvest, and before long his horrible work became attributed to a faceless terror called "The Lantern Man." As Jarme's killing continued and the district's people became increasingly frightened; Jarme himself retained little knowledge of his foul work, waking up exhausted the next morning, haunted by vague memories of horrible nightmares.

Last week Jarme was captured with a bloody knife in his hands. Jarme professed his innocence, but in his dreams he saw unspeakably ravenous tentacled creatures devouring the city, images he scrawled upon the walls of his cell in the asylum where he spent his last few days. Not even the pleas of his sister and a local cleric named Refrum were enough to save him from the grasp of justice, and only yesterday, Jarme Loveage dangled from the hangman's noose. Yet the feelings of relief engendered by the Lantern Man's capture and execution are destined to be short-lived, for the Whisperer knows that the kraken is nearing maturity, and is even now preparing the final stage of its dreadful plan.

Adventure Synopsis

The PCs meet with Master Refrum, an inventor priest who dwells in the Alchemists' Quarter of the Styes. Refrum is convinced that Jarme Loveage was wrongfully executed for the recent killings attributed to the Lantern Man. As proof, he points to the indisputable fact that a new murder has occurred, after the execution and in the same style as the prior murders. The priest believes that some sinister conspiracy has framed Jarme, and he asks the PCs to uncover this conspiracy and clear his friend's good name.

During their investigation, the PCs visit Hopene'er, the local asylum where Jarme was held. They eventually learn that Mr. Dory, a neighborhood politician, may be somehow connected to the Lantern Man killings.

The PCs eventually seek out Mr. Dory at his home, a ship held aloft by a crane over a muddy flat. A confrontation takes place, and after defeating the undead Councilman the heroes discover manic drawings of a gargantuan squid-demon of the deep similar to those in Jarme's cell. These clues lead them to a shantytown called Ashen Deeps, in which they discover a hidden temple to Tharizdun and are attacked by the creatures that dwell within. At the climax of this battle, the Whisperer itself appears from the poisoned sea to attack the heroes, trying to drag them to an arsenic grave.

In the aftermath, the PCs learn that the Whisperer is using the gloom and despair of the Styes as an incubator for a fiendish kraken it keeps in an underwater pit not far to the west of the Styes. In the alchemically polluted blackened husk of the building housing the pit, the heroes must put a stop to the Whisperer's plans and defeat the kraken before it can escape into the world.

Adventure Hooks

This adventure assumes that the PCs are in the Styes (or in a city that counts the Styes as a large district). If the PCs aren't based in the Styes, perhaps they have come to obtain a rare alchemical element for a spell from the Alchemists' Quarter, or need to speak to a retired adventurer who moved to the Styes to hide from his enemies. The PCs might even just be passing through the Styes when one of the following adventure hooks grabs their attention.

- While on the road in the Styes or a nearby city district, the PCs come upon a curious scene—a dozen children chasing and tormenting an old man. Onlookers cheer the children on as they pinch and trip the old man, who feebly brandishes a symbol of Boccob at them. The children taunt the old man, accusing him of being a friend of murderers. Unless the PCs intervene, the children pick up stones and start hurling them at the old man as they watch. If the PCs step in, the children run and the onlookers rapidly lose interest. The old man is Master Refrum, and if the PCs save him from his humiliating fate he asks them to escort him back to his home.
- Something one of the characters has done in the past made an impression on a local woman by the name of Eleanor Loveage. They may have inadvertently saved one of her relatives in a prior adventure, or perhaps she has heard rumors that one of the PCs helps out desperate people in times of need. Eleanor is Jarme's sister, and she can't believe that her brother could have done the terrible things for which he was executed. Despondent with grief, she contacts the PCs for help via a letter or messenger, asking them to meet her at Master Refrum's Workshop in the Alchemists' Quarter of the Styes.
- The two hooks above assume at least some level of altruism on the part of the PCs. If the characters in your group are of a more mercenary bent, they are approached by a mysterious, handsome, well-groomed human man dressed in black and red leather armor. He declines to give the PCs his name, and asks them if they're willing to make a little extra cash by doing him a small favor. This man is in fact one of the Councilmen of the Styes—Thornwell. He's discovered hints of Dory's involvement with the cult of Tharizdun, and suspects he's also had a hand in the murders. Thornwell has wanted to see Mr. Dory done in for some time, ever since he came to believe his fellow Councilman was responsible for the death of one of Thornwell's allies. Thornwell doesn't want to jeopardize his standing as Councilman by taking direct action against Dory, so instead he has selected the PCs (based on their previous accomplishments) to be his tool. When he meets with them, he tells them that he believes Jarme Loveage was innocent, and that the real Lantern Man is still out there. He recommends that they meet with Master Refrum, stating that he believes this man knows something about the murderer, but he doesn't indicate to the PCs that he thinks Dory is involved. He offers them a reward of 500 pp if they can find the real killer and bring him to justice. Thornwell suspects that Dory is this man, and hopes the PCs end up killing him (or at least force him to face justice). If the PCs refuse, or try to talk him into a larger reward, Thornwell proves quite capable at blackmail in return and displays disturbing knowledge of any acts that the PCs may have taken in the past that they don't want made known, inferring that if they don't accept the job, said knowledge might just find its way to the general public.

CHAPTER ONE: THE DYING CITY

Under smoke-bent gables, palsied carcasses of houses lean against each other—languid, broken, awaiting the peace of collapse. Door frames sag, dislocated from sod walls heavy with mildew, and hemorrhaged timbers hang like broken limbs from rotting boardwalks into the thick, rancid waters of the harbor below. In many places, sections of the boardwalks have fallen away completely, leaving gaping holes that expose polluted waters. This is the Styes, a motley and decayed district of a once-important port city.

Once, the Styes was a marvelous ocean gateway. Her magnificent buildings crowned a man-made island which fountained from the ocean itself, held aloft on leviathan forests of great oak piers and boardwalks. These huge beams proudly carried great facades of marble grandeur, crowned with a thousand dancing statues, impossible towers, and dizzily sloping gables, a testament to the quality of the greatest builders the world had to offer. Her streets thronged with richly clothed merchants, exotic courtesans, and the passing palanquins of nobility. It was known as the Island of Pleasures, a Xanadu of vice and indolence. It was a destination for the rich and decadent of the world.

But time is cruel. Warfare, corruption, famine, and natural disaster ruined many who loved the Island of Pleasures, and as their resources dwindled, so did this once magnificent Isle. The rich no longer cheered and embraced in her pleasure piers, the boardwalks no longer sang to the redolence of nutmeg, cinnamon, and ginger. The towering warehouses fell silent, their great cranes collapsing into ruin. And when the wars passed, the famine receded, and her neighbors had recovered from disaster, the Island of Pleasures remained forgotten. New people came to call the place home, crowding beneath fallen gables in mildew-tattooed hovels—poor people, desperate people. And on their heels came those whose trade would not be scorned here—alchemists who fouled the air and the rivers with failed experiments and belched poison into a yellow sky, sweatshops and factories that all but enslaved the desperate and needy, tanners and millers and butchers who reveled in the convenience of operating in civilization without having to worry about the impact their operations had on their neighbors. The port has always been somewhat sheltered by the trade winds, and as a result the acrid stink of the Alchemists' Quarter has created a permanent miasma of rancid yellowish vapor that hangs above the city and coats walls and roofs with a greasy film. Likewise, the waters under the Styes are thick with sewage, refuse from tanners and butchers, and pollution from the alchemists. In the eastern portion of the Styes, the pollution has become so bad that the river's flow has diverted completely, leaving a fair portion of the city's boardwalks suspended over a reach of rancid mud.

The Styes is currently ruled by the Councilmen, a corrupt group of officials who have seized power through control of a cornugon devil. In this adventure, only Mr. Dory takes an active role. The other members of the Councilmen and their cornugon servant take a backstage seat, engaged on other pressing matters, but are they likely to allow the heroes any peace if one of their number is slain?

♛ **The Styes (small city)**: Nonstandard; AL NE; 15,000 gp limit; Assets 8,904,000 gp; Population 11,872; Mixed (78% human, 5% gnome, 4% dwarf, 4% halfling, 3% half-orc, 3% half-elf, 3% other).

Authority Figures: Mr. Dory, councilman (male corpse creature human rogue 6/cleric 3); Rashlen, councilman (male human ranger 8/assassin 5); Sliris, Councilman (male wererat gnome lich wizard 11); Thornwell, councilman (male human bard 8/disciple of Asmodeus 6).

Important Characters: Tak Merakin, harbormaster (male human rogue 5); The Stitcher of Souls, bound servant of the Councilmen (cornugon devil); Refrum, inventor (male human cleric 5).

Others: 250 city constables (fighter 3).

Life in the Styes

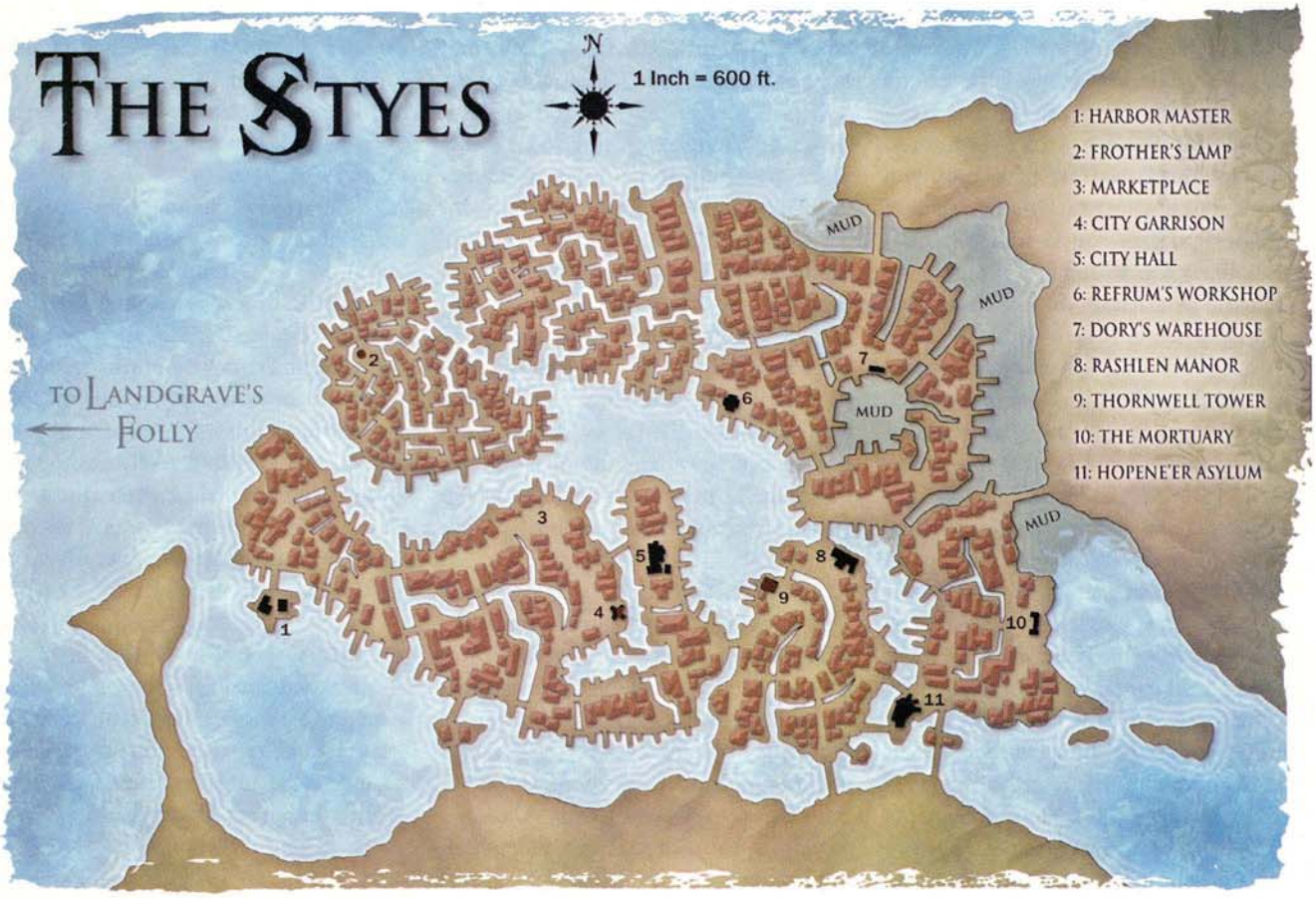
The first thing the PCs should notice about the Styes is its squalor. Once a fine district, the place has fallen on hard times and has one foot in the grave. This adventure presents only those encounters and events that drive the plot, but any character who spends time in this district is bound to have additional unpleasant encounters as well. Feel free to spice up a trip to the marketplace with a pickpocket attempt, or perhaps an attack by a group of four 5th-level rogues working as a press gang.

Although the Styes has a gp limit of 15,000 gp, the district's general squalor means that only items and services of 1,000 gp or lower are easily available. Those who wish to sell more valuable items generally keep low profiles to prevent theft or other unwanted attention. If a character wishes to procure goods and services that cost more than this, he must first make a Knowledge (local) check (DC 20 + 1 per 1,000 gp of value) to know whom to approach and where to go. A successful Gather Information check against the same DC works as well, although each Gather Information check takes 1d4+1 hours to perform.

There are a large number of taverns in the Styes, but the clientele of these establishments tends to be glum and morose. Rowdy companionship is rare, but brawls and fights are all too common. The best that the Styes has to offer visitors would qualify as a dive in other parts of the city. The same goes for inns; visitors to the Styes are often warned it is best to bring your own bedding and to move the bed in front of the door to prevent unscrupulous innkeepers from robbing you while you sleep.

While religion is important to many of the Styes' citizens, there are no active public temples or churches in the district. This is partially because the Councilmen demand steep payments from churches (mostly because they fear losing some of their authority over the district to religious leaders). The emotional fatigue the region places on clerics is also a factor, though. Disease, famine, infection, cruelty, and brutality weigh so heavily on the Styes that it tends to overwhelm most clerics, driving them to despair. Clerics of St. Cuthbert, Boccob, and other nonevil deities operate small personal shrines in nondescript buildings, and their flocks are quiet in their worship. Finding a cleric for healing requires a successful Knowledge (local) check (DC 20 + the level of the spell desired, up to 6th level). The most powerful religions in this area are hidden cults of Olidammara, Nerull, and Vecna. A fourth organized cult exists in the Styes as well—the cult of Tharizdun.

Disease and infection are very real concerns in the Styes. Most of the citizens suffer from some form of debilitating condition brought on by the poisonous wastes produced by the Alchemists' Quarter or the polluted waters of the river and harbor. Player characters are no exception to this rule. Anyone who visits the Styes is automatically exposed to a minor disease known as redface. Redface is caused by the pollutants in the air, and causes painful and itchy rashes to well up around the victims' eyes, mouth, ears, and nostrils. In particular, it causes painful inflammation of the eyelids. A successful DC 10 Fortitude save (made once per day) resists the effects. Redface has an incubation period of 1 day, but does not inflict ability damage. Rather, it simply causes a –2 penalty on all Concentration, Listen, Search, and Spot checks as long as the disease persists. Other



diseases are common in the Styes as well. Anyone who ingests water from the river or sea is exposed to blinding sickness, and anyone who is wounded and spends too much time outdoors in the Styes is exposed to filth fever. See page 292 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for details on these two diseases.

The map of the Styes shows the general layout and location of buildings and land features. The islands that support the buildings are almost all man made, either by ancient spells used to shape the ground or (more often) by huge boardwalks supported in 10-to-20-foot-deep brackish water by large soggy pilings. The Styes is often broken down into four quarters.

Low Quarter: Also known as Flotsam, this is the northwest section of the city. This region consists mainly of slum tenements, doubtful taverns, rickety warehouses, and decommissioned ships converted into buildings. This section of the Styes is slowly sinking into the sea, and as old structures become unlivable, new ones are simply built atop them. In places, the tangle of buildings is four or five stories deep, and many of the lower complexes are completely walled off from the outside world, making them an ideal place for hidden temples and black markets. Hanging rope bridges are often used to connect sections of this quarter.

Alchemists' Quarter: Once the seat of this city's scholastic and religious leaders, the Alchemists' Quarter comprises the northeastern section of the Styes. This quarter's once fine temples and universities have been replaced or converted into large factories and laboratories owned by prolific and often shady alchemists. A lack of regulation allows the alchemists to cut corners, producing mass quantities of potions and alchemical gear or focusing on experimentation. Iron chimneys belch foul vapors and smoke into the air from the massive stoves used to boil and bake nefarious ingredients, and more solid wastes are simply tossed into the waters that surround this quarter. This has caused a large section of this region to become so clogged with refuse and silt that the water has transformed into swaths and channels of reeking mud. Still, it's not uncommon to see the truly desperate wallowing in the filth, scrounging for something of value that a careless alchemist might have tossed out with the trash.

High Quarter: The seat of the city's government in better days, this quarter consists of the district's southeast section. Many of the buildings here were once community buildings, but only a few are still in operation today. The majority are either deserted or rented to strange and furtive eccentrics. This section of the Styes is the least populated, and its often empty streets are a haunting compliment to the throngs that clog those of the other three quarters. Guard patrols are the most common here, although these patrols are almost all corrupt and in the pockets of a corrupt noble, petty bureaucrat, or powerful merchant.

Merchant's Quarter: The southwest section of the Styes hosts most of the

district's industry and mercantile efforts. Most of the district's fishermen live here, and numerous import and export warehouses line the edges of this quarter, although the majority of them are abandoned and now serve as flophouses. Of the four quarters, the Merchant's Quarter is likely the most welcoming to visitors, and as a result, the healthiest part of the district.

Access to the various quarters is either by foot (often over rickety piers or connecting walkways), or by skiff. Fishermen often supplement their income in the off season or during times of bad weather by offering their skiffs and services as transport for visitors for prices as low as 1 cp (although a skiff ride to a dangerous section of town can cost up to 1 sp or more).

Listed here are brief descriptions of some of the more important or notable buildings in the Styes. A few of these are detailed further in this adventure, but most are left to you to develop as you see fit.

1. Harbormaster

The two stone buildings on this island are where Harbormaster Tak Merakin and his constables are based. Tak is a somewhat lazy man, and as long as merchants and fishermen pay their dues he does little to interfere with what goes on in the waterways. He reacts only to obvious threats like fires, riots, and storms, and even then with an infuriating lethargy.

2. Frother's Lamp

This decommissioned stone lighthouse once stood proud at the edge of the city, but as time has worn on, visitors to the Styes grew infrequent. When the last caretaker died under suspicious circumstances after a loud argument at a nearby tavern, none took up his mantle and the light has fallen into disrepair. Now, the only function it serves is as a landmark, and after a few more decades of slowly sinking into the soggy seabed, it may be completely consumed by shanties and other buildings built around and over its corpse.

3. Marketplace

This large open area serves as the primary market for the Styes. The place is always crowded, but the goods for sale here tend to be low quality and of dubious origin.

4. City Garrison

This three-story stone building houses the 250 members of the district's constabulary. Most of these people are little more than local youths who sought a job more out of a desire to rake in the benefits of being a paid thug than any real need to see justice done. The city guards' patrol routes are directly related to those who pay the largest bribes. A few of the guards are honest and fair, but they are exceptions. The gallows in front of the structure is usually rather busy.

5. City Hall

This once-elegant structure is the traditional seat of government in the Styes, which is itself a part of the larger city government in name only. Today, the four Councilmen prefer to spend the majority of their time in their own homes. A small staff of clerks and accountants still works here, and the Councilmen meet here once or twice a month in town meetings, but most of this structure's rooms have been quiet and abandoned for decades.

6. Refrum's Workshop

This modest wood and brick building is the home of Master Refrum, an inventor priest who has much to say to the PCs; further details appear in Chapter Two.

7. Dory's Warehouse

This is the home of one of the Styes' Councilmen, the sinister Mr. Dory. This location is detailed in full in Chapter Three.

8. Rashlen Manor

One of many run-down manors in the High Quarter, this building has the distinction of being the home of Rashlen, one of the Styes' Councilmen. This manse is said to be guarded by half-golems and similar horrible creatures.

9. Thornwell Tower

The tallest structure in the Styes, Thornwell Tower is a massive stone pinnacle of black and red marble surrounded by a high stone wall. One of the Councilmen, Thornwell, dwells here. Locals whisper that the tower is haunted by devils and contains at least one portal to the Nine Hells.

10. The Mortuary

With no strong religious presence, the task of dealing with the dead falls to the Styes Mortuary. This large building is surrounded by a disused graveyard; the district's dead are universally cremated in one of this structure's massive ovens. Those who operate the Mortuary are said at times to be thieves, undead, and even wererats. The truth is likely a combination of all three. In any case, the master of this morbid structure is Sliris, the most powerful (and most secretive) of the Councilmen.

11. Hopene'er Asylum

This massive building is the last remnant of a more optimistic time, a time when the desperate and doomed of the city were cared for and watched over. Hopene'er Asylum is detailed further in Chapter Two.

CHAPTER TWO: DISTURBANCES BELOW

Once the PCs have been contacted by or referred to Master Refrum, they should seek out his abode in the southwest corner of the Alchemists' Quarter. His home is humble and cluttered with half-finished clockwork inventions, the air thick with the smell of grease and metal. Hundreds of books line every available inch of shelf-space, and a tiny bed, itself covered with books, sits in the corner of the room.

Refrum himself is a slight, bent figure. He wears simple gray clothing, speaks in short, excited gasps, and waves his arms about when carried away with enthusiasm. Refrum is one of the last philanthropists of the Styes, trying constantly to combine his researches with care for the local poor.

Refrum takes pains to befriend the heroes—he has few friends in the city, and is eager to enlist the PCs' aid in clearing Jarme Loveage's name. Yesterday Refrum attended Jarme's execution, and the memories still pain him. He bemoans the fact that since Jarme was a fisherman, he spent a lot of his time alone. His

solitude made defending him or obtaining an alibi impossible, but Refrum insists Jarme was a kind and honest man without a cruel bone in his body. If Jarme's sister is present, she adds to Refrum's testimony with tears and pleading.

If asked for more concrete reasons as to why he feels Jarme was innocent, Refrum first points out that Jarme was never put on trial. The cleric tried to meet with Jarme in his cell at Hopene'er, but he was denied access by a group of thugs in the employ of Mr. Dory, one of the city Councilmen. Faced with this challenge, Refrum launched his own investigation into the Lantern Man killings.

He already knew that the Lantern Man had been on the prowl for the past six months, striking once a week and leaving his mutilated victims in public locations to be discovered in the early hours of dawn. He also knew that the constables had been singularly inept in tracking the killer down. His weekly slayings threw the Styes onto the brink of chaos.

Jarme was found looming over the body of his victim, blood covering his arms and a dagger clutched in his hand. At this point, Refrum admits that it's likely that Jarme's body killed this victim, but he points out that Jarme himself went to the gallows professing to have no memories of any slayings. Refrum offered his services, particularly his ability to cast *speak with dead*, but was told by the city guard that these interrogations had already been performed. When Refrum grew angry, he was threatened with incarceration in Hopene'er.

And now, Refrum's heard rumors that a brand new murder has occurred. According to his sources, the latest victim was a young fisherman named Raif—the authorities were strangely quick to ship his body to the Mortuary for cremation and tried to cover up the event. Nevertheless, word of this new murder is beginning to leak out. If the Lantern Man is still killing, how could Jarme possibly be the killer?

Refrum's investigations have led him to believe that a sinister conspiracy lurks in the Styes, and it is ultimately responsible for the Lantern Man killings. He suspects that agents of this conspiracy used enchantment magic to control Jarme and forced him to commit some of the murders. When he was caught, they used their influence to have him executed quickly. Now Refrum fears that the conspiracy not only is free to continue their work but that they know he's onto them.

This is where the PCs come in. Whereas Refrum is but one person, the PCs are many and can doubtless gain access to areas and people Refrum cannot. He suggests that they start their investigation with Hopene'er, the asylum where Jarme was held for a few days after his capture. Perhaps one of the caretakers there noticed something unusual about him during that time? He also recommends the PCs track down and speak with Constable Jute, the guard who found Jarme and his victim. Constable Jute can be contacted at the City Garrison.

Refrum plans to leave the city for a few weeks, and tells the PCs as much. He intends to lay low for awhile and hide out from "them" before "they" find him. Refrum's behavior might actually make the PCs suspicious that he's got something to do with the murders. In fact, he's simply afraid that his investigation into the murders has left him a marked man. There should be no need for his statistics, but if they are needed you can simply use the stats for the 5th-level cleric from the table on page 115 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Hopene'er Asylum

Hopene'er Asylum lies on Lamplicker's Way, a twisting area of the Styes in the High Quarter. The Asylum is an old prison with bare walls and barred windows. A faded sign bearing the words, "Welcome Home" hangs above the Asylum's main entrance. Hopen'er is run by Physician Emil Trantor, a prematurely old man with a worried brow and ashen gray skin. Trantor is also a busy man, with a staff of only four to control more than 400 inmates and prisoners. As a consequence, many of the less "troubled" inmates are called upon to help run the place.

When the PCs arrive at the looming stone structure, they are met at the door by Brey, a dull-witted youth who has a worrying way of staring at people for a long time before answering questions. He eventually agrees to allow the PCs to enter, and bids them wait in a bare foyer while he fetches Physician Trantor.

Trantor's initial attitude is indifferent, but if made friendly with a DC 15 Diplomacy or Intimidate check he agrees to talk to them about Jarme. He describes him as a quiet man who was resolute in his claims of innocence. Trantor is quick to point out that most of the criminals housed here plead their innocence, and since Jarme was caught over a body with a bloody knife in his hands, Trantor is convinced of the fisherman's guilt. During his short stay at Hopene'er, Jarme had only one visitor. It takes a DC 30 Diplomacy or Intimidate check (or alternately, spells like *charm person* or *detect thoughts* to read Trantor's surface thoughts at the right time) to get him to divulge the identity of this visitor—it was one of the Councilmen: Mr. Dory.

A successful DC 20 Sense Motive check made during the interview allows a PC to note that Trantor seems a little nervous. If they press the questioning, or if they've made him helpful (DC 30 Diplomacy or Intimidate check), he reveals that Jarme spent his last few days of life drawing on the walls of his cell. Trantor saw no problems supplying a condemned man with some charcoal, but the results of Jarme's scrawlings were truly unsettling. Once he mentions them, he admits that it would be nice to get a second opinion about the meaning of the scribblings and invites the PCs to follow him to Jarme's cell.

The journey into the asylum's nether regions is not pleasant. The constant screaming and cursing of inmates combines with an almost unbearable stench to crush the spirit of the idle visitor. Eventually, Trantor comes to a heavily locked door at which he cautions the PCs, "This wing is where the worst of our cases are kept. I beg you not to look into any of the other cells. We've given succor to many folk over the years, but still, those within these cells are truly forsaken by the gods." So saying he unlocks the door to reveal a long corridor with iron doors to either side. Small viewing hatches are firmly shut on the faces of each door. An inhuman gurgle churns up from a cell to the right and is horrifically joined by

a second identical voice within the same cell, an exact echo of the first, as if both voices came from the same body. Suddenly the other cells begin to spring to life. The iron doors shudder under great blows, a woman's garbled and shrill voice screams for death and, most unsettlingly, a baby begins to cry.

Trantor ignores the sounds and moves to the end of the hall, where one door hangs open. This is Jarme's cell. Its walls are covered with crude charcoal pictures that depict some colossus of the sea. An investigation of these scrawlings requires a Search check to sort out what exactly Jarme was trying to depict. A DC 15 Search check is enough to note that several of the pictures of the tentacled sea beast show it shackled in a collar being held by a vile creature akin to a great fish. Another shows the creature devouring a city, a city whose skyline can be identified as the Styes with a successful DC 15 Knowledge (local) check. A DC 20 Search check is enough to note that in one depiction of the tentacled sea creature, it is trapped in a deep black well, its tentacles rising up to suck the life from humanoid bodies.

A successful DC 23 Knowledge (dungeoneering) check identifies the fish-like creature as an aboleth, and a DC 23 Knowledge (nature) check identifies the tentacled sea creature as some form of giant squid. A DC 35 Knowledge (arcana) check reveals that the "giant squid" is likely a kraken.

Jarme's body has been cremated, and is not available for *speak with dead* spells.

Constable Jute

If the PCs visit the City Garrison, there's a 30% chance that Constable Jute is there. Otherwise, he's on patrol and should be returning in 1d8 hours. As long as the PCs don't admit they're investigating the Lantern Man, the guards are relatively friendly. If they realize what the PCs are up to, they become close-lipped and their attitude changes to unfriendly. They've been warned by their commanders to let the matter of the Lantern Man lie, as Mr. Dory has bribed the right people in the Garrison.

Constable Jute himself is a rarity in the city watch. He's an honorable man, and if asked gives a full and frank account of his discovery of Jarme Loveage in the area of the Alchemists' Quarter known as Hemlock Pit. He remembers in particular that, given the amount of mutilation Jarme had inflicted upon the body, he was remarkably well-behaved and calm when apprehended. A successful DC 20 Sense Motive check made while speaking with Jute allows a character to note the constable seems nervous talking about the Lantern Man case. If confronted, and his attitude is adjusted from friendly to helpful with a DC 20 Diplomacy or Intimidate check, he admits that his superior has ordered him to not talk to others about the case. With the latest murder, Jute has become convinced that Jarme wasn't operating alone, and he suspects that his superiors have been bribed in an attempt to cover up what's really going on. If pressed further, he takes

pains to say he doesn't want to name any names, but then observes wryly that one of the city's Councilmen, Mr. Dory, has been hanging around the Garrison a lot lately, meeting with watch commanders behind closed doors. These visits ceased abruptly once Jarme was executed. Jute is unwilling to go into more detail, but eagerly tells the PCs where Mr. Dory lives if they ask.

Scene of the Crime

Jute is willing to show the PCs where he caught Jarme, if asked. Unfortunately, there are no further clues to be discovered here. The same isn't necessarily true of the most recent murder scene; the one that took place after Jarme's execution. This most recent murder took place early the morning this adventure begins. Constable Jute can escort the PCs to the site; otherwise, a successful DC 15 Gather Information check is enough to learn the location.

The most recent murder took place in an alley in the northern end of the Alchemists' Quarter. The body itself has been cremated already (the rapid processing a result of Mr. Dory's influence on the Mortuary), but the murder site holds one important clue. The site is still spattered with blood and bits of stray tissue—the task of cleaning the site having been left to the rats and seagulls that now swarm in the area. A successful DC 23 Search or Survival check uncovers a faint set of strange tracks in the bloody dirt, partially obscured by the trampling action of gawkers and guards. These tracks were left by the skum who committed the murder at Mr. Dory's command, in an attempt to maintain the momentum of fear while the aboleth continues its search for a good replacement for Jarme. The tracks were too faint for the city guard to notice, but the PCs might be able to follow them back to Dory's warehouse with a DC 27 Survival check.

CHAPTER THREE: HEMLOCK PIT

Although Jarme's murderous actions were controlled by the Whisperer, there are no clues at this stage in the adventure that point the PCs toward the aboleth. If the PCs don't learn about Mr. Dory's possible involvement in the sad case of Jarme Loveage from Constable Jute or Physician Trantor, or they haven't found the trail leading from the latest murder, they may need to resort to spells like *divination* or *commune*. In this case, use the results of these spells to steer the PCs toward an investigation of Mr. Dory and his home.

Dory's unique home is in the center of the Alchemists' Quarter, perched on the edge of the large swath of mud known as Hemlock Pit. He is very well known to the harlots of the Pit as both a figure of fear and mockery. If the PCs ask around about Mr. Dory in the area, they find the locals unwilling to talk without a bribe of at least 10 gp. A successful DC 20 Gather Information check points the PCs to Master Loquid, a local perfumer. Loquid admits he fills regular orders of various perfumes for Dory, and mentions that he's happy to supply the man with his wares since he always seems to carry an unpleasant odor he can only describe as "from the grave." Loquid has had frequent long conversations with Dory and has heard him mention his "beauties in the pool" several times. Loquid also knows that, due to a skin condition Dory suffers, he has flooded the inside of his home with water and that stoves toil day and night to keep the temperature within nice and hot.

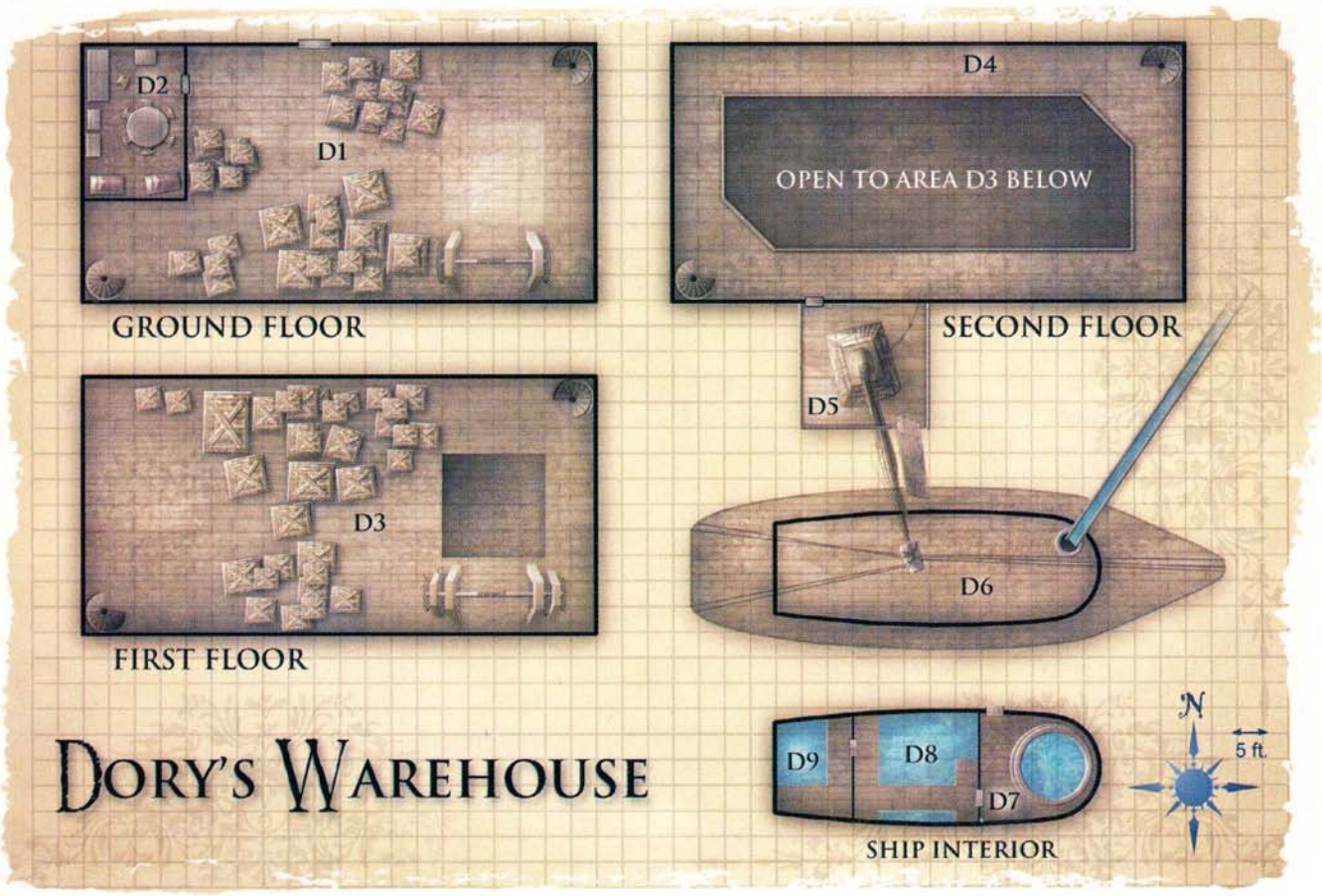
A successful DC 25 Gather Information check also points the PCs to Grotten Longflint, gnome adventurer and freelance thief. Grotten recently suspected Dory was hiding a large amount of stolen pearls in his warehouse and did some preliminary research on the place to determine if it was worth robbing. Grotten ultimately decided it was too risky, but he did note that Dory has recently developed a strange fascination with the sea. He's been replacing some of his guards with strange, half-fish men, and recently received a flesh golem made from sea creature parts from an unknown benefactor.

Dory's Warehouse

A vertical stone building rises from the cobbles, three stories high and dotted with iron-barred windows. The warehouse's slate roof rises dizzily some 60 feet above, and in places its walls and roof seem to be coated with a bitumen black gruel with the viscosity of phlegm; encrustations from the pollution belching from nearby alchemist workshops. Behind the warehouse is a gray-green pit of mud. A huge rickety crane protrudes from the far wall of the warehouse, its limbs rusted arthritically. Dangling from it is a dripping ship hulk, hanging some fifty feet above the greasy mud below. A crude bridge attaches the crane to the ship's deck but it looks a dizzy climb. A trough also connects the ship to a nearby water tower, and steam rises from places just as rivulets of water drain from the hull into the mud below.

Dory's warehouse is a three-story stone structure. During the day, the place bustles with workers who busily load and unload the hefty six-wheeled wagons that frequently come and go. Dory rents space in the warehouse to merchants and alchemists, many of whom use it as a staging area for shipments. After dark, the warehouse is locked tight and a group of manticores are allowed to wander within, guarding the place from intruders. Dory himself lives in the suspended ship, and without flight, the only way to get to it is via the crane. A successful DC 25 Climb check allows a character to clamber up the crane's slippery struts, but a far safer route is to approach from the inside of the warehouse itself.

The warehouse workers don't want any trouble. If the PCs bully their way in, they panic and flee the scene to call upon the city watch. Fortunately for the PCs, they have an unknown ally working with them behind the scenes. Another of the city Councilmen, Thornwell, has personal reasons for wanting Mr. Dory humiliated or even killed. He's been keeping an eye on his enemy as a result, and might even have indirectly hired the PCs to take care of him (see Adventure Hooks). In any case, Thornwell's bribed the constabulary well to ignore calls for help from Dory's Warehouse; if the PCs assault Dory, he will be forced to rely solely on his own guards and minions for his defense. No aid will come from the city watch.



D1. Warehouse Main Floor (EL 8)

The interior of the warehouse is piled high with crates, boxes, and packages, most marked with alchemists' personal symbols and "FRAGILE" or "HANDLE WITH CARE." A pair of iron spiral staircases rise from opposing corners of the room.

A large lift in the eastern section of the warehouse is operated by a winch; this lift can be used to raise and lower large objects, but the winch must be operated by no fewer than two people in order to do so.

The contents of the crates are, for the most part, non-volatile. However, each round the crates are subjected to fire or other violent activity, there is a 20% chance something inside explodes. This explosion quickly triggers a chain reaction that causes the entire warehouse to burst into flames. The initial explosion deals 8d6 fire damage to everything in the warehouse (Reflex DC 15 half), and 1d6 fire damage per round thereafter (DC 15 Reflex negates). Only 2d4 rounds later, the upper floors of the warehouse collapse, inflicting 12d6 damage to anyone still inside and burying everyone involved. A successful DC 15 Reflex save halves the damage from the collapse, but does not prevent being buried. If the warehouse catches on fire, a huge crowd quickly gathers to help put out the flames before they spread to nearby buildings. The crane that holds Dory's home aloft is damaged in the fire, but it's made mostly of metal and won't immediately collapse as a result. The skum in area **D5** and **D7** quickly mobilize to prevent the fire from spreading to the ship itself, and spend the next several days repairing the crane and installing a rickety set of ladders while Mr. Dory himself plots revenge on those he suspects blew up his warehouse.

Creatures: By day, this room is quite busy, with eleven workers (male human commoner 1) bustling about loading and unloading shipments of alchemical supplies and products from or onto large six-wheeled carts. The guards ignore the PCs, directing all questions to area **D2**. If they see the PCs attempt to enter area **D3** above, they alert the manager; if the PCs become belligerent, the workers flee the warehouse in a hopeless attempt to summon the constabulary.

By night, the only denizens of the warehouse are the three manticores that normally live on the upper floor. The lift is lowered at night, granting the manticore guards full access to all three stories.

Manticores (3): hp 57 each; *Monster Manual* 179.

Treasure: A search of the crates reveals a wealth of alchemical gear and supplies. In all, the total value of the crates' contents averages at about 7,500 gp, and consists of everything from tindertwigs to vials of acid to portable alchemist labs. Of course, most of the contents of these crates are inventoried and clearly labeled, and if the PCs try to pawn them in town they'll attract unwanted attention when the rightful owners take notice.

D2. Management

This office contains several filing cabinets, a work desk, a large table, and some rickety bunk beds.

If the PCs arrive during business hours, they are directed to this room, where they are greeted by the warehouse manager, a phlegmatic individual named Borsk Chumwell (male human expert 2), a no-nonsense man with a perpetual case of redface. His initial attitude toward the PCs is indifferent. If made helpful with a DC 30 Diplomacy or Intimidate check he'll see what he can do about arranging a meeting with Mr. Dory, but warns the PCs that it may be several days before the boss has time to meet them. In fact, Mr. Dory will never grant the PCs a meeting; if they want to talk to him, the PCs must take matters into their own hands.

A search of this room turns up nothing suspicious; it would seem that the warehouse and its activities are legitimate.

D3. Upper Storage (EL 8)

This area is used for long-term storage. Many of the contents of these crates are in limbo, their owners having forgotten or died or otherwise decided to never reclaim their belongings.

Creatures: The three manticore guardians nest in the western portion of this area. Mr. Dory purchased the manticores as kittens, and they are furiously loyal to him now and do not suffer intruders. They recognize the warehouse workers and won't attack them, although they do find growling at them menacingly to be a pleasant diversion.

Manticores (3): hp 57 each; *Monster Manual* 179.

Treasure: The contents of the crates in this area are similar to those in area **D1**, save that it's unlikely that anyone will object if the PCs loot and pawn the alchemical supplies. Many of the supplies have spoiled, but 3,700 gp worth of equipment is still serviceable.

D4. Upper Walkway

A walkway surrounds the upper reaches of the warehouse. Once used as an observation deck, the walkway is now all but abandoned, used only as an approach to area **D5**. The door to area **D5** is made of iron and is kept locked with a good lock (Open Lock DC 30). All of Dory's guards carry matching keys for this lock, as does Dory himself.

D5. Crane (EL 9)

A dangerous walkway, its edge open and unprotected by a railing, surrounds the rusting bulk of an ancient crane here. The crane's arm extends over the muddy flats some 60 feet below, dangling a large iron and wood ship in the air.

The walkway around the crane is rickety, but is in no danger of collapse. The true danger comes from its uneven surface and lack of railing. Anyone who takes more than one move action in a round on the walkway must make a successful DC 12 Balance check. Failure indicates the character's movement ends for the round—failure by 5 or more indicates the character falls prone. A character that falls must make a DC 12 Reflex save to avoid falling off the walkway. A fall into the rancid mud below inflicts 1d6 nonlethal damage and 5d6 lethal damage. Additionally, anyone who falls into the mud is exposed to filth fever.

The crane's workings are rusted beyond repair.

Creatures: Three skum rogues stand guard here at all times, hiding within the crane's bridge. They clamber out of the crane to confront anyone they spot trying to board the ship, calling out an alarm to alert the ship's occupants as they attack.

Skum rogue 5 (3): CR 6; Medium aberration (aquatic); HD 2d8+8 plus 5d6+20; hp 54; Init +2; Spd 20 ft., swim 40 ft.; AC 19, touch 12, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +4; Grp +10; Atk +9 melee (1d8+14, *+1 trident* with two-point Power Attack) or +6 ranged (1d6/×3, composite shortbow); Full Atk +9 melee (1d8+14, *+1 trident* with two-point Power Attack) and +1 melee (2d6+5, bite with two-point Power Attack) or +6 ranged (1d6/×3, composite shortbow); SA rake 1d6+3, sneak attack +3d6; SQ amphibious, darkvision 60 ft., evasion, trapfinding, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge; AL LE; SV Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +5; Str 22, Dex 14, Con 18, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 4.

Skills: Balance +11, Hide +11 (+15 underwater), Listen +13 (+17 underwater), Move Silently +9, Spot +13 (+17 underwater), Swim +14.

Feats: Alertness, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack.

Languages: Aquan, Common.

Possessions: *+1 chain shirt, +1 trident,* composite shortbow (+6 Strength) with 20 arrows.

Tactics: Note that these skum automatically make Balance checks to move about on the crane walkway. Remember also that characters who balance without possessing at least 5 ranks in the skill are treated as flat-footed, and are thus subject to sneak attack damage. The skum are fond of using bull rush moves to knock enemies off the walkway into the filthy mud below, after which they use their shortbows to fire on anyone who survives the fall.

D6. Dory's Hulk

This decommissioned hulk has been flooded with water on the inside to allow the aquatic occupants to move about more easily. The skum that lurk in area **D7** patrol the outer deck once every half-hour, but rely on those in area **D5** to warn them of intruders. As the characters move about on the hulk, be sure to stress the ominous creakings and groanings that come from the chains that hold the hulk aloft. These chains are solidly attached, and there's no danger of the ship crashing to the ground, but it certainly shouldn't feel safe.

The only entrance into the ship's interior is near the bow on the port side; this door is kept locked (Open Lock DC 30) and opens into area **D7**.

Destructive PCs might try to break the chains that hold the ship aloft. This is easier said than done, however, without magic. If the PCs manage to destroy one chain, though, the entire ship lurches and everyone on board is knocked prone. One round later, the added stress is enough to cause the ship to tear free from any remaining chains, causing it to drop 60 feet into the mud below. The ship is solidly built and won't break open upon landing in the mud, but everyone within the ship still takes an automatic 6d6 damage from the fall.

Thick chains: 6 in. thick; Hardness 10; hp 180; Break DC 32.

D7. Front Pool (EL 9)

The air in this room is hot and humid. Clouds of steam rise from a pair of roaring boilers toward the bow, bolted to the floors and walls on either side of a large round pool of steaming water. The walls, floor, and even ceiling of the room are thick with condensation and mildew, and shine with moisture.

Characters must make a DC 12 Balance check when moving about in this room due to the slippery footing.

The large pool in this room is not quite boiling, but it is almost uncomfortably hot. The bottom opens into the ship's flooded hold, and allows access into areas **D8** and **D9** through similar holes in this deck's flooring.

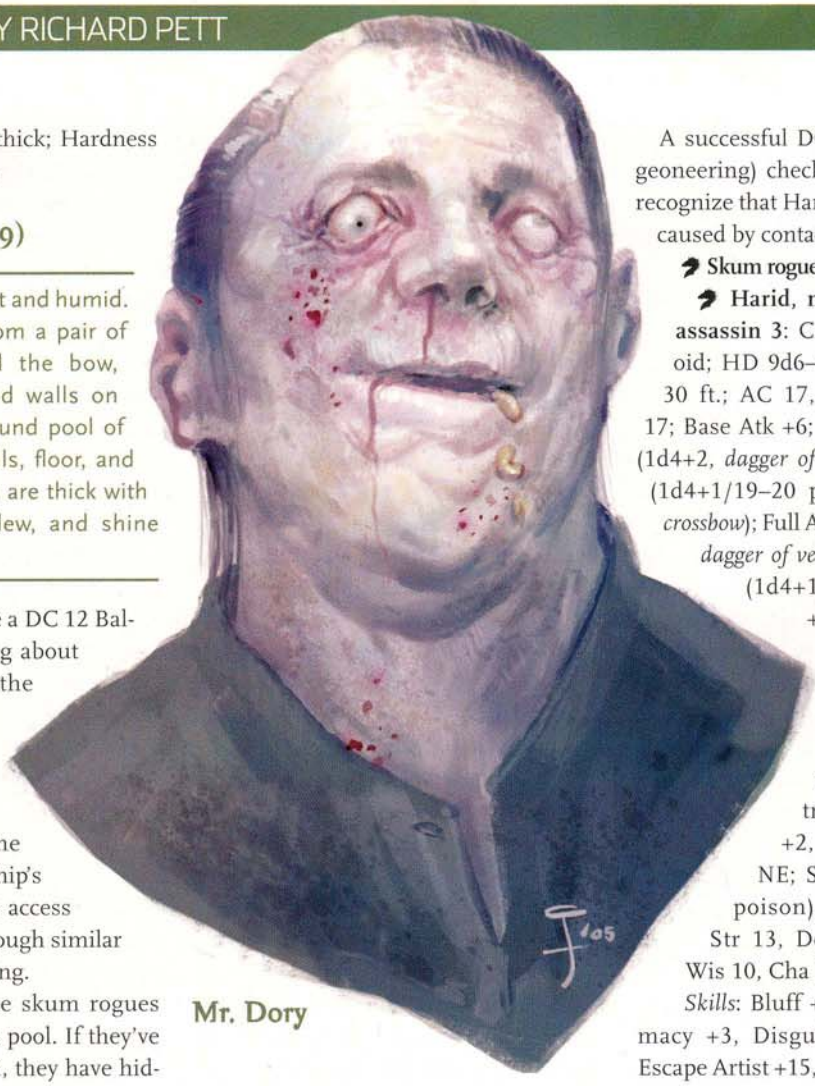
Creatures: Three more skum rogues lurk in the waters of this pool. If they've been alerted by an alarm, they have hidden themselves behind the boilers and just under the surface of the water, and have prepared actions to rise up and fire upon any enemies that enter the room. Otherwise, the skum spend their time simply relaxing in the water, sleeping and talking quietly while they wait for new orders.

Skum rogue 5 (3): hp 54; see area **D5**.

D8. Central Span (EL 10)

The air in here is cloyingly hot and damp. Two swirling pools of dark water take up most of the flooring here, but a narrow wooden bridge crosses toward the stern and another door in the wall. Condensation from the steaming pools collects on the walls and ceiling to drip back down in a constant rain of warm water.

As with area **D7**, characters must make DC 12 Balance checks when moving in this room. Failure by 5 or more indicates a fall into one of the pools, which are both open to the hold below and are each 15 feet deep.



Mr. Dory

Creatures: The last two skum rogues who serve Mr. Dory lurk in this room, along with one of the first of those victims transformed and dominated by the Whisperer after its arrival in the Styes. This is a hateful man named Harid. Once a freelance assassin, Harid fell victim to the Whisperer while hunting for his latest mark in Flotsam. Now completely dominated and transformed by the aboleth's tentacles, Harid must soak his slimy, transparent skin in water at least once every 10 minutes to avoid excruciating pain. At the Whisperer's orders, Harid offered his services to Mr. Dory; of course, his actual purpose here is to keep an eye on Dory, whom the Whisperer does not trust. Dory suspects this, and as a result tends to keep Harid in this room, supposedly so he'll be close at hand if he needs him but in fact to keep him under close observation.

A successful DC 23 Knowledge (dungeoneering) check allows a character to recognize that Harid's skin condition was caused by contact with an aboleth.

Skum rogue 5 (3): hp 54; see area **D5**.

Harid, male human rogue 6/assassin 3: CR 9; Medium humanoid; HD 9d6–9; hp 22; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +6; Grp +7; Atk +8 melee (1d4+2, *dagger of venom*) or +10 melee (1d4+1/19–20 plus poison; *+1 hand crossbow*); Full Atk +8/+3 melee (1d4+2, *dagger of venom*) or +10/+5 melee (1d4+1/19–20 plus poison; *+1 hand crossbow*); SA death attack (DC 15), sneak attack +5d6, spells; SQ evasion, improved uncanny dodge, poison use, trapfinding, trap sense +2, uncanny dodge; AL NE; SV Fort +2 (+3 against poison), Ref +11, Will +3; Str 13, Dex 17, Con 8, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 12.

Skills: Bluff +13, Climb +10, Diplomacy +3, Disguise +10 (+12 acting), Escape Artist +15, Forgery +11, Hide +15, Intimidate +3, Jump +10, Move Silently +15, Open Lock +12, Search +14, Use Rope +12, Swim +7.

Feats: Blind-Fight, Endurance, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (hand crossbow)[B], Rapid Reload (hand crossbow), Run, Weapon Focus (hand crossbow).

Languages: Common, Elven, Gnome.

Assassin Spells Known (3/1; caster level 3): 1st—*disguise self, jump, obscuring mist*; 2nd—*darkness, spider climb*.

Possessions: *Dagger of venom, +1 hand crossbow* with 10 Medium spider venom-coated bolts (Fort DC 14, 1d4 Str/1d4 Str), *+1 studded leather, potion of cure moderate wounds*, ebony brooch depicting galloping horses (worth 200 gp), 24 gp.

Tactics: Harid is cunning and clever. If combat begins here, he remains hidden in the waters while the skum fight the PCs and he prepares a death attack against one of them. He has no great loyalty to Dory, so if things start to look bad he tries to escape by swimming through the hold below, into area

Tharizdun Holy Symbol

Tharizdun

An old and evil god of uncertain origin, Tharizdun was imprisoned long ago by the concerted effort of all of the human gods. He is a power of darkness, decay, entropy, and ruin who seeks nothing less than the unraveling of the entire universe. His adherents believe that Tharizdun will grant them great favors when he remakes the world. Hateful aberrations who dream of the destruction of the human world sometimes proffer worship to this dark deity, and there are some who say that Tharizdun hails from the Far Realm or the dim memories of an earlier universe—origins that suggest an affiliation with ultraterrene or extratemporal creatures such as aboleths, cloakers, grells, psurlons, or similar monsters.

Tharizdun is a neutral evil deity. His symbol is a dark spiral, and his favored weapon is the dagger. His clerics can choose from the domains of Chaos, Destruction, Evil, Force, and Madness. The Force and Madness domains are detailed in both *Complete Divine* and *Lords of Madness*, but since none of the clerics in this adventure use these domains these references are not needed to run this adventure.

D7, and thence out of the ship. Given time, he flees back to the temple of Tharizdun (see next chapter) to join his master there.

D9. Dory's Chamber (EL 11)

The air here is thick with clouds of steam, scented with cloves, cinnamon, and ginger. Strange large plants hang entwined from the ceiling, fronds of thick yellow, vines of great size tangled around unsettlingy enormous bulbs and flowers. Two huge iron stoves belt out great heat into the room, which is dominated by a large greenish pool. From the look of its steamy surface the waters must be very warm. A rickety desk sits against the edge of the pool, its surface cluttered with papers, a wicker plate of strange-looking fish, and a locked mahogany box.

Creature: This is Mr. Dory's personal chamber. Rumors abound that he has a terrible skin condition—in fact, his condition arose after he died many years ago, assassinated by a fellow Councilman of the Styes. Shortly thereafter, he was restored to a semblance of life as a corpse creature (a template from the *Book of Vile Darkness*) by a disciple of the archdevil Asmodeus in return for information about the man who assassinated him. Mr. Dory repaid the dubious favor by murdering his "savior" after he extracted the same revenge from the assassin. He managed to re-establish his position as Councilman of the Styes, and since then, Mr. Dory has grown accustomed to his new undead "life," but not before he was almost driven insane by his impotence and unfulfilled desires. Dory now dwells in this room, leaving it only when business or pleasure demands. The warm air and water soothe the aching of his undead flesh, but tend to leave him looking bloated and foul, like a drowned corpse.

Several months ago, Mr. Dory converted to the worship of Tharizdun after he discovered the cult operating in the Low Quarter of Flotsam. He's progressed slowly as a cleric of this cult, and hopes to use his growing divine power to wrest more control of the Styes from his fellow Councilmen. In return for his support, a wizard allied with the Tharizdun cult gave Mr. Dory a "gift"... a particularly loathsome flesh golem made from fish, monstrous lobsters, sharks, and octopi, but with the head of a beautiful woman. Dory keeps this golem here in his room as a guardian.

Mr. Dory, male human corpse creature rogue 6/cleric 3: CR 10; Medium undead; HD 9d12; hp 58;

Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +6; Grp +9; Atk +10 melee (1d6+3/15–20, *+1 keen rapier*) or +8 ranged touch (1d6 acid, vial of acid); Full Atk +10/+5 melee (1d6+3/15–20, *+1 keen rapier*) or +8 ranged touch (1d6 acid, vial of acid); SA sneak attack +3d6, spells; SQ darkvision 60 ft., evasion, rebuke undead, trapfinding, trap sense +2, uncanny dodge, undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +9, Will +5; Str 14, Dex 15, Con —, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 8.

Skills: Balance +13, Bluff +10, Concentration +6, Diplomacy +10, Disguise +8 (+10 acting), Forgery +11, Gather Information +8, Intimidate +12, Jump +4, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +5, Knowledge (local) +11, Knowledge (religion) +5, Sleight of Hand +15, Swim +11, Tumble +11, Use Rope +4.

Feats: Combat Expertise, Deft Hands, Dodge, Persuasive, Weapon Focus (rapier).

Languages: Aquan, Abyssal, Common, Infernal.

Cleric Spells Prepared (caster level 3): 0—*create water, detect magic, mending, read magic*; 1st—*command* (DC 13), *doom* (DC 13), *obscuring mist, protection from law*^{D}; 2nd—*death knell* (DC 14), *hold person* (DC 14), *shatter*^{D}.

D: Domain spell. *Domains*: Chaos (cast Chaos spells at +1 caster level), Destruction (smite 1/day, +4 attack, +3 damage).

Possessions: *+1 keen rapier* with a silver handle inset with a collage of female figurines with gold filigree work, *bracers of armor +2*, *ring of protection +1*, 12 vials of acid, noble's outfit, 5 vials of fine perfume worth 200 gp per vial, 34 pp.

Flesh golem: Spd 10 ft., swim 30 ft.; hp 79; *Monster Manual* 135.

Tactics: Dory commands his flesh golem to attack anyone that enters his room; he has no interest in talking to anyone initially. The golem remains just underwater, gaining improved cover (+8 AC, +4 Reflex against foes on land) using its reach to attack. While the golem fights, Dory retreats to the far side of the room and prepares an action to cast a spell or throw a vial of acid at a casting spellcaster.

Treasure: The wicker plate that sits on the desk is heaped with strange and hideous fish, their bodies burst as if from within. A successful DC 20 Knowledge (nature) check identifies them as deep sea fish.

A successful DC 15 Search also discovers a crumpled up piece of speckled parchment that bears a message.

"Once again the catch indicates disturbances beneath us. We cannot locate the cause, but fear THEY may be in the waters near your city. Praise Tharizdun! He rests but is waiting! The Whisperer wants to begin the Lantern Man harvests again soon. The young one must be fed. You will help us. The harvest must be greater, for the young one grows beyond our expectations. His appetite is huge. You will help sate it until the Whisperer finds a new Lantern Man. If you have one that would work, bring him to the temple and we shall appraise his worth."

Dory received this note earlier in the day from one of the skum minions of the Whisperer, demanding he help find more flesh for the kraken to consume. The standoffish tone enraged him and he threw it away in disgust. The other notes on the table are all either horrid examples of disturbing and foul erotica, written with a shaky hand, or various letters that implicate Dory in serious crimes such as slavery and murder. Still more pieces of paper contain strange and disturbing scribbles and crude drawings of tentacled monsters. If the PCs saw the drawings on the walls of Jarme's cell, they'll immediately notice a shocking similarity between them.

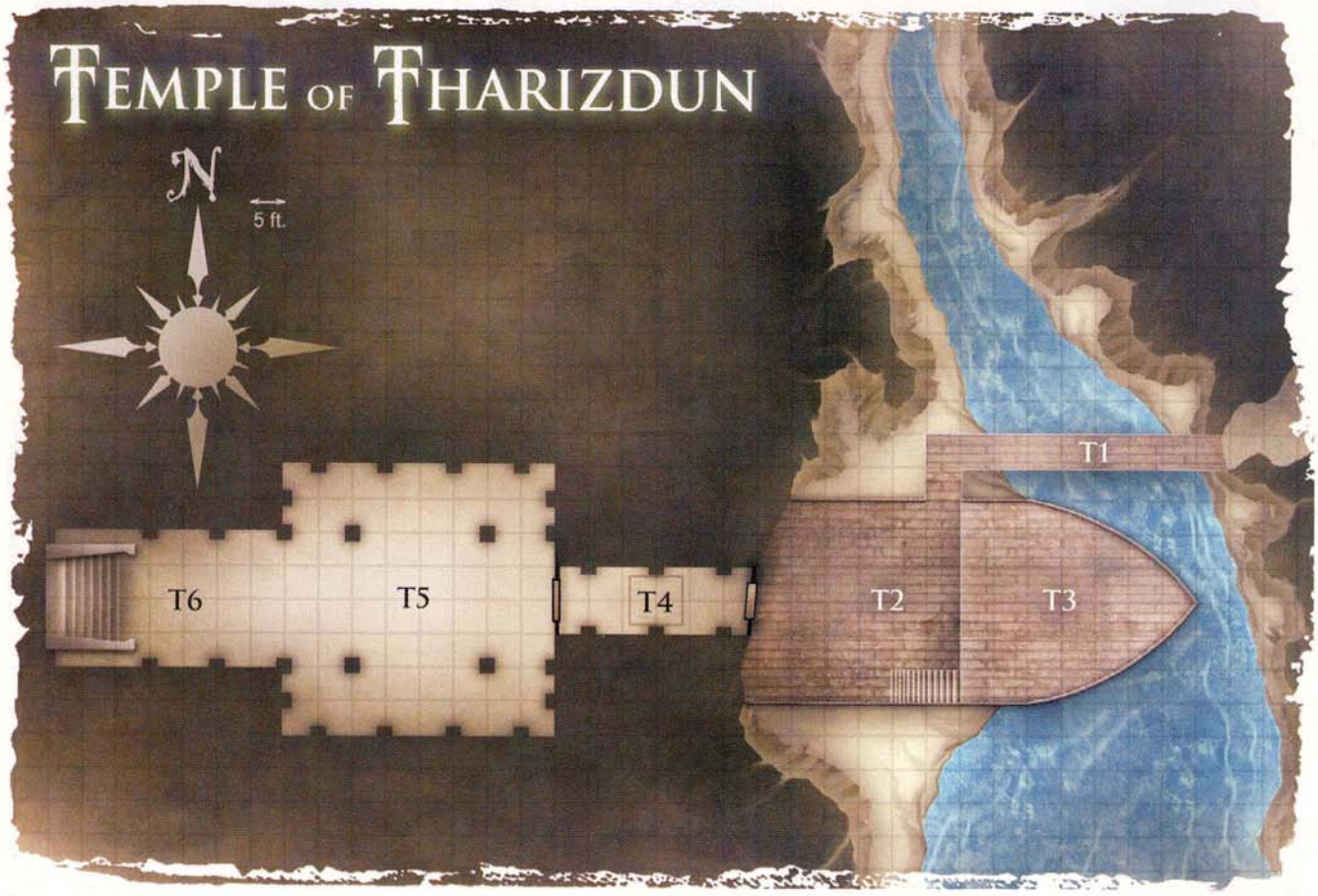
The mahogany box on the desk is unlocked, and contains a velvet purse that holds six rubies worth 500 gp each. It also contains a tattered book bound in greasy black leather and embossed on the cover with a strangely disturbing spiral symbol. A DC 20 Knowledge (religion) check identifies this symbol as that of Tharizdun. The book itself is handwritten in a combination of Abyssal and Infernal, and contains numerous rituals, prayers, and invocations to Tharizdun. Although these words won't necessarily help the PCs, the folded piece of paper tucked inside the front cover might. This page contains a single short note, written in Infernal, that reads:

"This book contains all of the invocations and prayers you'll need to learn the truth, Mr. Dory. The Dark God's faithful are wary of new converts, but learn the words and they should accept you soon enough. Seek their pulpit in the evening shadow of Frother's Lamp. Praise Tharizdun!"

Development: If the golem is defeated, Dory's bravado vanishes. He begs for mercy, promising information to the PCs if they spare his unlife. If the PCs ask him about the Lantern Man and Jarme's role in the murders, he admits that Jarme was used as a pawn. He tells the PCs that a cult of Tharizdun is thriving in the Old Quarter, and that they've made an alliance with some sort of sea monster who has captured one of the Dark God's spawn. The cultists have a plan: they've found a way to augment the spawn's growth by using the latent fears of the citizens of the Styes as an incubator. By encouraging these fears with the Lantern Man murders, the cultists hope to have their god's spawn fully grown in a matter of weeks. Mr. Dory claims ignorance as to how the cultists are harvesting these fears, and professes to not know how they controlled Jarme or what manner of creature the god-spawn is. He does know the temple's location, and gives the PCs directions if they ask. He tries to escape as soon as he can, and would rather not give up all his information if he can help it. If he does escape, he leaves the Styes for a few months before hiring assassins to get revenge on the PCs for forcing him to leave.

CHAPTER THREE: THE LAMP'S SHADOW

Flotsam is another name for the Low Quarter of the Styes, the most depressing section of an already morbidly depressed district. After dealing with Mr. Dory, the PCs should have learned (either from him or from documents found in his lair or by interrogating



him) of the existence and approximate location of the temple of Tharizdun in the Low Quarter. They should also suspect that the true menace behind the Lantern Man killings is an aboleth.

Further complicating matters once this chapter begins is the arrival of additional aboleths from the Endless Nadir. These aboleths learned about Sgothgah's traitorous turn to religion, and recently managed to track both it and the fiendish kraken by magical means to the Styes. These aboleths were sent from the depths to destroy Sgothgah and release the kraken into the sea, and as this chapter begins the aboleths have traced them to Landgrave's Folly and have already mounted an attack on their traitorous kin, forcing the aboleth savant to flee to the temple to recover from its wounds.

The Temple of Tharizdun

The temple of Tharizdun is located near Frother's Lamp. At sunset the abandoned lighthouse's shadow reaches out to point at the entrance to the temple. The temple is cobbled together from a partially sunken slave galley and some abandoned apartments under an equally abandoned pleasure pier. The area surrounding the temple consists of partially collapsed buildings and walled-off alleyways, atop which newer buildings and boardwalks were built. The entire place is damp, reeks of mildew, and is haunted by the creaking and groaning of the surrounding buildings. The floors, walls, and ceilings of the temple are of old wood, too damp to burn and full of opportunities for splinters.

No cultists dwell inside the temple. The faithful of the Dark God hide their true calling and live normal lives most of the time, as dock workers, fishermen, or sailors. Once a month, they gather at this location, wait for the stroke of midnight, then silently file into the temple to worship the Dark God until morning. Until the aboleth Sgothgah arrived, the cult had no actual leader—it was merely a mob of wretched lowlifes whose tainted dreams brought them together. Now that the aboleth has organized them, the cultists meet more often, up to once a week. Chances are that there are no cultists on site when the PCs arrive, but if you wish, they could be in the middle of a dark ceremony at this time. None of the cultists are particularly dangerous—they're all 1st-level commoners, experts, or warriors, and they shouldn't be difficult for a 9th-level party to defeat, yet the presence of two dozen chanting cultists can add a lot of atmosphere to the adventure if you choose to go this route.

T1. Milden Span

A tangled wall of apartments, partially ruined and abandoned store fronts, and other buildings rises up on either side of a thickly shuddering inlet of tainted sea water. Those down low near the waterline are empty and desolate, while the

ramshackle additions built over their roofs look progressively more inhabitable as they rise up into the polluted sky. The overall effect is that of a canyon, its walls made of a cross-section of a dying slum rather than of stone. A narrow timber bridge sags across the inlet here, leading from the back of a crooked alleyway across to what appears to be a partially sunken slave galley that has been incorporated into the ruined wall of buildings.

Aside from swimming in from the harbor, clambering down the back side of several stories of buildings, or using magic, this span is the only approach to the temple's entrance.

Development: The skum that lurk in area **T3** keep an eye on this area, and react to intrusions as detailed there.

T2. Pier

The main deck of the partially ruined slave galley is buckled and cluttered with trash, driftwood, and other refuse washed up from the high tide. To the east, the galley's prow rises up like a jagged fang, and to the west is a wall of boarded-up and badly weathered building facades. One doorway, a pair of massive wooden portals, remains curiously unbarricaded, and the path between it and the bridge is cleared of rubble.

This area is used by the cultists as a meeting point before their monthly gatherings to venerate their god. Fortunately for the PCs, this month's meeting is still several days away, leaving this area deserted.

The door opens into area **T4**, but is locked.

Strong Wooden Door: 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 20; Break DC 25; Open Lock 30.

Development: The skum that lurk in area **T3** keep an eye on this area, and react to intrusions as detailed there.

T3. Ship Prow (EL 10)

The ancient ship's prow juts up from the nasty waters, its surface a hopeless tangle of ruin, driftwood, refuse of the worst kind imaginable, and rats.

The refuse and trash heaped here is dense rubble, and costs 2 squares of movement per square moved through. It also adds 5 to the DC of Balance and Tumble checks, and 2 to the DC of Move Silently checks.

Creatures: Before the Whisperer arrived, the Tharizdun cultists didn't see a need to post guards in front of their temple. The aboleth understands the value of additional security, though, and has posted a group of four skum rogues here. The skum lurk in hiding, crouching behind mounds of rubble as they keep watchful eyes on the surrounding area.

Skum rogue 5 (4): hp 54; see area **D5**.

Tactics: When they see the PCs, the skum wait for them to come within 30 feet before they rise up and attack with their bows. They use the rubble as cover (+4 AC, +2 to Reflex saves), engaging in melee only if the PCs come to them, or if the PCs try to duck

into area **T4**, in which case the skum give chase into the temple.

T4. Chuul-Haunted Hallway (EL 9)

This oppressive hallway reeks of mildew and rotting fish. The walls are horribly stained and the ceiling sags with pockets of water and fungus. The sound of wood creaking against wood fills the place.

Creatures: Humanoid cultists and aboleth savants aren't the only ones who have had their dreams tainted by Tharizdun's whispers. A pair of chuuls have also become haunted by the Dark God's sendings, seeking out this cult relatively recently. They find the proximity to the temple soothing, and now lair in the waters below this section of the Styes. The chuuls live in a large tide pool under this hallway, and have rebuilt a section of the pier above so they can quickly remove a 10-foot-square section of the hallway's floor from below. They know when services are scheduled, so if they hear the PCs moving about in this hallway they know that they're intruding. The chuuls' Listen checks suffer a –5 penalty since the flooring of the hall muffles sound somewhat. If it's night and the PCs are carrying light sources, the light seeping through the cracks in the floorboards automatically alerts the chuuls.

Chuuls (2): hp 93; *Monster Manual* 35.

Tactics: If they notice intruders, one of the chuuls waits until it hears at least one set of footsteps upon the central 10-foot section of the hall, and then it pulls the whole floor section down into the pool. Any creatures standing on this section must make a DC 20 Reflex save to jump clear; otherwise they fall 5 feet into a 20-foot-deep tide pool. The waters of the pool have a powerful riptide—it's a DC 20 Swim check to swim against the current, which carries things out to sea quickly.

Once the floor is opened, the chuuls clamber up into the hallway to attack the intruders. The chuuls fight to the death, pursuing the PCs as far as they can if they try to escape.

Aboleth Feats

Sgothgah possesses many feats unique to the aboleth race. Most of these feats are detailed further in *Lords of Madness*; the details given here provide enough information to use these feats without that book.

Craft Aboleth Glyph (Item Creation): Allows an aboleth to create permanent magical glyphs with different powers. The only aboleth glyph in this adventure is the glyph of ambient dread, which is detailed in Chapter Four.

Quickslime (General): Increases an aboleth's slime save DC by +2, and reduces the time requried for a victim's skin to transform to 1d4+1 rounds.

The following feat is new to this adventure.

Dream Haunting

You can mentally control sleeping creatures at great range.

Prerequisites: Cha 21, ability to use *dominate person* or *dominate monster* as a spell-like or psi-like ability, or the ability to duplicate this effect with a supernatural ability (such as via an aboleth's enslave ability or a vampire's dominate abilty).

Benefit: You can use your dominate ability against any creature you have successfully dominated normally at any time in the past. Using this feat uses one of your daily uses of dominate if that ability isn't usable at will. The target must be asleep when you attempt the dream haunt; creatures that do not sleep (like elves) cannot be dream haunted. If you try to dream haunt a creature and it is not asleep, that use of dream haunting is wasted.

The maximum range of dream haunting is 1 mile, plus one additional mile per point of Charisma bonus. You do not need line of sight or line of effect to your target. If the target fails to resist the domination, you enter the target's dreams and can communicate with him, provided you can speak the target's language. Once you order the target to take action, he enters a somnambulistic state, not quite awake nor fully asleep. The dream-link ends, and you cannot communicate with the target further unless your ability also establishes a telepathic link. The victim attempts to follow your orders to the best of its ability (up to the restrictions imposed on the base ability), but only as long as it remains in its somnambulistic state. This state persists naturally for 1d4+1 hours (or the duration of the base ability, if it is of a shorter length), and the victim cannot voluntarily wake from it. Other creatures can waken the victim by dispelling or supressing the effect with magic, but physical means cannot end the effect before its time.

Once a victim of a dream haunting awakens, he retains no memories of his actions while dominated. Nor does he gain any of the benefits of that night's sleep; he becomes fatigued and may not be able to prepare spells. Victims who are exposed to multiple dream hauntings may eventually develop half-formed nebulous nightmares of their nights spent dominated.

T5. Dark God's Chapel (EL 12)

This cavernous room reeks of rotting fish. The walls are covered with carvings of complex spirals and smeared with blood, as is the floor and ceiling. Crude chairs and benches scavenged from disparate locations are arranged in a half-circle facing west, where a soggy flight of stairs leads down into a frothing tide pool. Over the stairs, a huge shark's carcass hangs from the rafters by lengths of mildewed rope. Numerous human heads have been crudely stitched to the shark's side, and the whole thing is very poorly preserved and is the primary source of the foul stink in the room.

When the cultists gather to worship Tharizdun, this room is filled with 27

human commoners, experts, and warriors of divergent occupations, brought together by their faith in the imminent end of the world. These warped cultists theorize that paying homage to the Dark God will result in rewards in the new world he creates from the ashes of this one. Since the cultists only meet a few times a month, chances are that the PCs won't have to deal with them.

The shark serves as the cult's altar. As they sacrifice beggars, prostitutes, and vagrants to the Dark God, they affix the heads of their victims to the shark, which slowly rots away and eventually tears loose of the ropes and falls into the waters below to be eaten by scavengers, at which point the cultists catch a replacement shark and start over again. The source of this bizarre ritual is lost to the cultists; they've been performing it for generations and don't question the dream-sent wisdom of Tharizdun.

Creatures: Several hours before the PCs first arrive in this room, Sgothgah flees here from the pit in Landgrave's Folly, forced to temporarily abandon its kraken ward to a group of aboleths that tracked it from the Endless Nadir. The aboleths wounded Sgothgah, but it managed to flee with a few *dimension doors*. Sgothgah still seethes from its defeat, and after resting to replenish its spells and using most of the healing supplies hidden in area **T6**, it spent the last hour or so planning its return to Landgrave's Folly to drive the aboleths off. It has decided to recruit the chuuls and skum located here, and to recall the skum it "loaned" to Mr. Dory, but hasn't yet started to move on this plan when the PCs arrive on the scene.

Sgothgah, known to the cultists only as "The Whisperer," was a well-respected and powerful scholar in aboleth society before it turned to the worship of Tharizdun and went into self-imposed exile. As an aboleth savant, Sgothgah has several unique abilities. The aboleth savant prestige class is detailed in full in *Lords of Madness*, but all relevant information is reprinted in the Whisperer's stat block below. As a Huge aquatic sorcerer, Sgothgah's familiar is a squid; this familiar grants Sgothgah a +2 bonus on grapple checks.

Sgothgah, The Whisperer, sorcerer 6/savant aboleth 2/cleric 1: CR 12; Huge aberration (aquatic); HD 11d8+66 plus 6d4+36; hp 166; Init +0; Spd 10 ft., swim 60 ft.; AC 24, touch 10, flat-footed 24; Base Atk +10; Grp +29; Atk +17 melee (1d6+9 plus slime, tentacle); Full Atk +17 melee (1d6+9 plus slime, 4 tentacles); SA enlarged enslave (DC 23), glyph mastery, psi-like abilities, rebuke undead, slime (DC 24), spells; SQ darkvision 60 ft., mucus cloud, ossification +2, recrudescent memories, summon familiar; AL NE; SV Fort +15, Ref +4, Will +20; Str 29, Dex 10, Con 22, Int 18, Wis 18, Cha 25.

Skills: Bluff +27, Concentration +23, Diplomacy +9, Disguise +7 (+9 acting), Gather Information +14, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (arcana) +21, Knowledge (history) +15, Knowledge (religion) +21, Listen +22, Spellcraft +13, Spot +22, Swim +17.

Feats: Ability Focus (enslave), Ability Focus (slime), Alertness (when Supsug is in tentacle's reach), Craft Aboleth Glyph, Dream Haunting, Empower Spell, Quickslime.

Languages: Aboleth, Abyssal, Aquan, Infernal, Undercommon.

Enlarged Enslave (Su): Sgothgah's enslave special attack has a range of 60 feet, rather than the standard 30 feet for most aboleth.

Glyph Mastery (Sp): Sgothgah spends 75% the normal cost in XP or raw materials when crafting an aboleth glyph. It may cast *glyph of warding* once per day as a spell-like ability.

Ossification (Ex): Sgothgah's flesh is protected by ridges of bone that grant a +2 bonus to its natural armor.

Recrudescent Memories (Ex): Sgothgah is in greater command of the countless memories of its victims, and gains a +2 bonus to Charisma as a result.

Psi-Like Abilities (manifester level 16th): At will—*hypnotic pattern* (DC 19), *illusory wall* (DC 21), *mirage arcana* (DC 20), *persistent image* (DC 20), *programmed image* (DC 21), *project image* (DC 22), *veil* (DC 21).

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/8/8/7/4; caster level 8): 0—*detect magic, ghost sound* (DC 17), *mage hand, message, open/close, prestidigitation, resistance, touch of fatigue* (+17 melee touch, DC 17); 1st—*chill touch* (+17 melee touch, DC 18), *comprehend languages, expeditious retreat, magic missile, shield*; 2nd—*blindness/deafness* (DC 19), *invisibility, mirror image*; 3rd—*displacement, tongues*; 4th—*dimension door*.

Cleric Spells Prepared (caster level 1): 0—*guidance, mending, read magic*; 1st—*cure light wounds* (2, both already cast), *protection from good*[D].

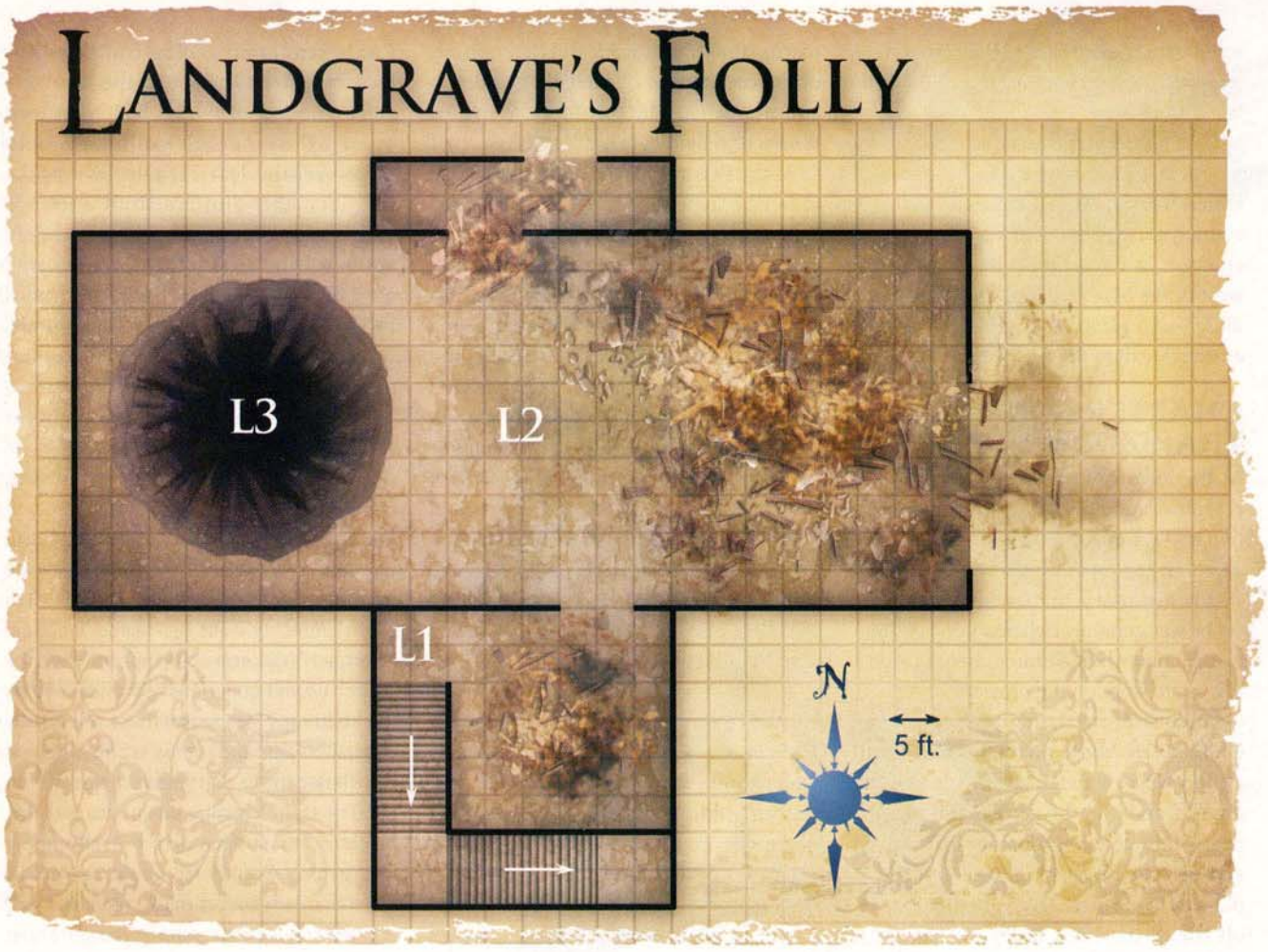
D: Domain spell; *Domains*: Destruction (1/day, +4 on attack roll, +1 damage), Evil (cast Evil spells at +1 caster level).

Possessions: *Amulet of health +2* (embedded in the spongy flesh of its head), *bracers of armor +5* (worn on two tentacles), *ring of protection +2* (worn on a third tentacle).

Supsug, squid familiar: hp 83; *Monster Manual* 281.

Tactics: When the PCs enter, Sgothgah lurks in the waters of area **T6**, about 10 feet below the surface, but as soon as it hears them in the room it moves into action. The aboleth is quite intelligent, and takes only a few moments to realize that the intruders are probably quite powerful if they've managed to get by the skum and chuuls. If it has time before the PCs approach area **T6**, it casts *tongues* on itself so it can understand them and *invisibility* to then hide. It then casts *programmed image*, making it appear that the foul shark altar comes to terrible flopping life, programming the illusion to attack any creatures in the temple. Treat this image as a flesh golem, save that its attacks should always seem to just barely miss. Sgothgah programs the illusion so that each time a PC successfully hits the "golem" it reacts believably, but the PC gains a Will save to see through the illusion nonetheless.

Sgothgah observes the battle from just below the pool's surface, taking note of PC tactics and apparent strengths and weaknesses. During that time, it casts *veil* on itself and its familiar (to make both look like high-level human clerics of Tharizdun), followed by *shield, displacement*, and *mirror image* before finally casting *project image* to appear in the center



of this area, at which point it demands that the intruders lay down their arms and surrender, promising to call off the "golem" if it still exists.

Sgothgah uses empowered *magic missiles*, *hypnotic patterns*, and *blindness/deafness* spells against the PCs, causing the spells to originate from its *projected image*. It may also use *illusory wall* to try to divide the PCs or cut them off; it won't put an *illusory wall* between himself and his image, since doing so would block line of sight to the *projected image* and cause the spell to end prematurely. If the PCs discover the aboleth in area **T6**, it tries to enslave fighters and rogues, and then surges up to the water's edge to attack nearby creatures physically.

If the aboleth is brought below 30 hit points, it uses *dimension door* to escape, lies low for a while, and then tries to capture the PCs at a later point, convinced that they are skilled enough to be used to drive off the enemy aboleths that now lurk in Landgrave's Folly.

Development: Sgothgah doesn't want to kill the PCs if it can help it. If it can enslave them, or at least capture them alive, it can use them as allies to launch an attack on those aboleth that recently drove it out of Landgrave's Folly. It has no interest in dealing with captured PCs fairly, as the concept of bargaining with lesser beings is abhorrent to its alien mind. Nevertheless, a canny party might be able to Bluff the aboleth into thinking they wish to do as it commands. It uses its slime to grant PC allies the ability to breathe water if necessary.

T6. Watery Descent

A wide descent of slippery stairs leads down to a sloshing tide pool.

The waters of this pool are 20 feet deep, and connect below to a lengthy underwater tunnel that leads to the west.

Treasure: The cultists have hidden a stash of treasure they've collected from their victims over the years under the topmost step leading down into the pool. Noticing that this step can be removed requires a successful DC 22 Search check.

Inside the hollow under the removable step are several mildewed sacks of coins, a rusted iron coffer, and an object wrapped in oiled cloth. There are 8 sacks in all, each of which contains 100 sp and 50 gp. The iron coffer holds 17 pieces of jewelry worth a combined total of 1,530 gp, along with 3 *potions of cure light wounds*, 4 *potions of cure moderate wounds*, and 6 *potions of remove disease* purchased from alchemists. The coffer also contains 10 empty potion vials used previously by Sgothgah.

The object wrapped in oiled cloth is a *lyre of building* the cultists found several years ago. This is their greatest treasure, and they have been keeping it as a gift for one they hoped would someday come to lead them, to use it to build a grand

temple for the Dark God. They offered the lyre to Sgothgah, but the aboleth has little use for the item.

Development: The submerged tunnel leads to Landgrave's Folly, a sunken church that Sgothgah has been using to contain the fiendish kraken. The tunnel emerges in the sea bed about 4,000 feet west of the Styes, 60 feet underwater. An *illusory wall* placed by Sgothgah hides the entrance/exit to the sea bed.

CHAPTER FOUR: THARIZDUN'S PROGENY

At the height of the Styes' glory, a local eccentric landgrave announced his intention to dig a massive pit to discover where a hole in the earth would eventually lead. Locals dismissed the landgrave as mad, yet he was certainly rich and none of them complained when he hired them at amazing pay to work on the project.

Of course, the landgrave's plan was doomed. He chose a small island about a mile west of the Styes as his staging ground, and over the next several months nearly four dozen workers perished from strange and mysterious accidents that plagued the project. In an attempt to stave off the ill luck, the landgrave commissioned the construction of a building—a church to bless his work. Yet even this failed, and on the night the church was to be consecrated, a violent but strangely localized earthquake struck and the entire island sank 60 feet into the sea, killing nearly 100 workers as well as the landgrave himself. The church's sunken spire has remained visible since then under the sea, a testament to foolish men. The site is known now as Landgrave's Folly, and it is here that Sgothgah hid the growing kraken, deep in the flooded ruins of the landgrave's unfinished pit.

Recently, a band of aboleths from the Endless Nadir tracked the traitor Sgothgah to this location, using scrying magic. It took them some time to reach Landgrave's Folly, but when they did they set upon the site with a fury. Three aboleths perished before they forced Sgothgah to flee, and since then the remaining aboleths have been systematically trying to reach the pit in the sunken church to either release or destroy the kraken within, hoping to disrupt Sgothgah's work and cover up any evidence that one of their ilk could succumb to what they consider the mental illness of religious belief.

As the PCs approach Landgrave's Folly, either because they have succumbed to Sgothgah's enslavement or after they explore the mysterious flooded tunnel from area **T6**, the aboleths have almost managed to overcome the remaining guardians in the sunken church and have defeated or deactivated nearly all of the glyph traps Sgothgah has placed. They're currently arguing over what's to be done with the kraken itself. One of the remaining aboleths feels it should be destroyed, while the other wants to enslave it. What the aboleths have not planned for is the young kraken's strength, and the imminent arrival of a party of adventurers.

Landgrave's Folly

The church is in ruins, and completely underwater. Its weed-encrusted spire reaches within 10 feet of the ocean surface, where it has posed a hidden menace to passing ships. The PCs likely need to use *water breathing* to fully explore the sunken church; if none of them can cast this spell, *potions of water breathing* are readily available in the Styes, as they are one of the Alchemists' Quarter's more popular exports. More potent magic devices, such as *necklaces of adaptation* and *plate mail of the deep* can be purchased in the Styes if the PCs are able to make the right contacts.

If the PCs haven't been enslaved by Sgothgah, or slew it before they could learn from it the existence of the fiendish kraken and aboleth in Landgrave's Folly, they might mistakenly assume that the peril in the Styes has passed. Nothing is further from the truth; see "Concluding the Adventure" if the PCs don't finish the job by destroying the fiendish kraken.

Before you run this final set of encounters, make sure you're familiar with the way underwater combat and exploration works; rules for this appear on pages 92–93 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

There are three possible entrances into the church at Landgrave's Folly. Characters approaching from the surface might be drawn to the church's spire, the top of which has been torn open by numerous collisions with ships over the years. On the level of the sea floor, the church's front entrance and a side entrance both gape open, although these entrances are tangled with rubble and require a successful DC 20 Swim check to successfully navigate. Failure indicates that the swimmer has become snagged on a piece of rubble and his movement ends for that round.

As the PCs approach the sunken church, read the following:

Looming out of the briny murk is a large sunken church. The building lists at a slight angle, its walls festooned with seaweed and barnacles. It appears that the church wasn't quite finished when it sank; the building's facade is a mess of partially collapsed walls and ruined scaffolding that has settled into a dangerous tangle of rubble. The church's spire juts upward, nearly reaching the surface before itself ending at a gaping wound—it would seem that more than one unfortunate ship has sailed into the crown of the submerged spire over the years.

L1. Ruined Spire (EL 4)

The top of this bell tower is open to the sea. A seaweed-tangled staircase descends into the depths of the tower, and at the base lies a looming heap of rubble crowned by a barnacle-encrusted iron bell.

Trap: Sgothgah once had dozens of *glyphs of warding* protecting the church, but nearly all of these have been dismantled or triggered by the other aboleth who now command the site. One lone *glyph* remains in this room. It's placed in the entrance from this area into area **L2**; anyone passing through the entrance who isn't a worshiper of Tharizdun triggers it.

***Glyph of Warding* (Blast)**: CR 4; spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (*glyph of warding* [blast], 8th-level caster, 4d8 sonic, DC 20 Reflex save for half damage); multiple targets (all targets

within 5 ft.); Search DC 28; Disable Device DC 28.

L2. Flooded Temple (EL 9)

Layers of silt cover the once fine flooring of this sunken church. Immense mounds of collapsed scaffolding lie heaped in the eastern end of the church, but this spectacle is dwarfed by the gaping pit that yawns to the west, practically engulfing the entire wing of the structure. The pit's walls and rim flicker and writhe with intricate glyphs, woven together in a complex tapestry of magical light. The glyphs seem to undulate and writhe, almost slithering across each other like an obscene carpet of snakes.

Creatures: Only two aboleths from the original hunting party remain, the others having succumbed to Sgothgah or its glyph traps. They've weighted down the bodies of their kin and thrown them into the pit in an attempt to stave off the kraken's hunger while they try to come to terms with each other. If the PCs manage to infiltrate the church without alerting them, they find the two aboleths floating above the rubble to the east, arguing in Aboleth about what to do with the creature in the pit. If, on the other hand, the aboleths know the PCs are coming, they take the time to cast *veil* to make themselves appear as large schools of harmless fish and prepare actions to enslave anyone that comes within 30 feet.

Aboleth (2): hp 76; *Monster Manual* 9.

Development: If anyone swims over the open mouth of the pit in area **L3**, the kraken within strikes. You should strive to have one of the aboleths trigger this attack if the PCs don't do so themselves. Perhaps just as the PCs are about to win a fight with the two aboleths, one of them tries to escape melee by swimming into the pit for cover.

L3. Landgrave's Pit (EL 11)

The pit is 860 feet deep and pitch black; the landgrave was industrious, and his pit made it a fair depth before tragedy struck. The bottom of the pit is strewn with a thick layer of ooze and rubble; the bodies of the workers that died within have long since decayed away. Remember that characters that dive too deeply into the pit might start suffering pressure damage from the water (*Dungeon Master's Guide* 304).

The writhing runes that surround the pit comprise a unique magical aboleth glyph known as a *glyph of ambient dread*. This potent glyph acts as a beacon for negative emotions generated within a 5-mile radius, which easily engulfs all of the Styes. The glyph is powered by these emotions, generating a focus of magical energy in the pit. This energy can then be harnessed, to be used in a variety of ways. Sgothgah has crafted these glyphs to focus the energies on the unholy symbol of Tharizdun on the fiendish kraken's flank. In this manner, the glyphs use the ambient dread of the Styes as an incubator, increasing the kraken's growth considerably. Normally, the great beast would take years to reach maturity, but the *glyph of ambient dread* has reduced this time to only a few more weeks. The glyph is more like a magic item than a spell effect, and in order to be destroyed it must either be subjected to a force similar to a *Mordenkainen's disjunction*, or the pit walls that bear the glyph must be brought down. The glyph itself functions at caster level 8.

Creature: The fiendish kraken normally lurks several hundred feet down in the pit, but since it was abandoned by Sgothgah, it's slowly been rising up through the water, acclimating itself

The Spawn of Tharizdun

Scaling the Adventure

"The Styes" is designed for a group of 9th-level characters, but with a little work it can be adapted for use by 7th–8th-level characters or 10th–11th-level characters. Simply adjust all NPC character levels up or down as appropriate by a number equal to that which the average party level of your group deviates from 9. Remember to adjust treasure rewards as appropriate. Specific changes to the adventure are:

7th–8th-level Characters: Remove one of the manticores from Dory's warehouse. Keep Harid's stats as they are, but remove the three skum from area **D8** so the assassin has to fight the PCs alone. Remove the flesh golem from area **D9**. Remove one of the chuuls from area **T4**, and the aboleths in area **L2** should each be suffering from 20–30 points of damage.

10th–11th-level Characters: Advance the manticores in Dory's warehouse and the flesh golem in area **D9** by 4 HD each. Give each of the chuuls in area **T4** 2–4 levels of cleric. Also, consider adding a 10th-level human cleric of Tharizdun to the temple area as a cult leader. If you have access to *Lords of Madness*, add a shaboath golem as an additional reinforcement for the aboleths in area **L2**. Make the fiendish kraken a half-farspawn kraken instead of a fiendish creature.

to the pressure as it goes. It now lurks only 30 feet down in a cloud of ink, and if it sees any activity in the waters above the pit's entrance, it jets up to strike.

Although still young, the kraken is already monstrous to behold. The beast is a black-green creature with 40-foot-long oily tentacles, but its vast eyes are its most hypnotic and horrifying feature—eyes that burn with a red malevolent fire. A black mark lies on the creatures flank, the symbol of Tharizdun.

The Spawn of Tharizdun: CR 11; Huge magical beast (aquatic); HD 14d10+98; hp 175; Init +0; Spd swim 20; AC 18, touch 8, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +14; Grp +29; Atk +19 melee (2d8+7, tentacle); Full Atk +19 melee (2d8+7, 2 tentacles) and +17 melee (1d4+3, 6 arms) and +17 melee (3d6+7, bite); Space/Reach 15 ft./10 ft. (40 ft. with tentacle, 20 ft. with arm); SA constrict 2d8+7 or 1d4+3, improved grab, smite good 1/day (+14 damage), spell-like abilities; SQ damage reduction 10/magic, darkvision 60 ft., ink cloud, jet, low-light vision, resistance to cold 10 and fire 10, spell resistance 19; AL NE; SV Fort +16, Ref +9, Will +9; Str 24, Dex 10, Con 25, Int 21, Wis 20, Cha 20.

Skills: Concentration +16, Hide +2, Intimidate +15, Knowledge (geography) +14, Knowledge (nature) +14, Listen +24, Search +24, Sense Motive +14, Spot +24, Swim +15, Use Magic Device +24.

Feats: Blind-Fight, Combat Expertise, Improved Critical (tentacle), Improved Natural Attack (tentacle), Multiattack.

Languages: Abyssal, Aquan, Common, Infernal.

Spell-Like Abilities (caster level 7th): 1/day—*control weather, control winds, dominate animal* (DC 18), *resist energy*.

Tactics: The fiendish kraken knows it is destined for greatness, and for now has been content to let Sgothgah serve its needs. It has no interest in alliances, and attacks aboleth and PC alike, using Combat Expertise to increase its AC to 23. Only Sgothgah, if the aboleth is present, escapes the kraken's wrath. If reduced to fewer than 60 hit points, the kraken loses interest in the battle and attempts to escape.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

In order to put an end to the Lantern Man killings plaguing the Styes, the PCs need only slay Sgothgah. Yet simply killing it won't save the Styes from the doom that lurks in Landgrave's Folly. If the PCs don't destroy (or at least drive off) the fiendish kraken, it eventually kills the two aboleths nearby, and after two more weeks of absorbing the Styes' ambient fears, it has gained a total of 20 Hit Dice. At this point, the kraken begins to systematically take control of the Styes, destroying any ships that attempt to enter or leave the region and periodically slithering up to the city to pluck food from its sagging docks. Since the Tharizdun cultists are able to predict the kraken's strikes and can appease it with sacrifice, their power grows. Given time, they might even be able to displace the Councilmen as rulers of the Styes. Defeating the kraken and its cult at this point becomes more difficult, but should make for an exciting adventure nevertheless.

If the heroes defeat the kraken, they have done a huge service to all sea-faring folk in the area even though the locals might not realize it. Several weeks or months after the kraken's defeat, the Councilmen finally agree to reward the PCs, and each receives a small teak coffer containing dozens pearls and other gems. Each box of gems is worth 5,000 gp. The Councilmen might call upon the PCs again in the future, perhaps even to investigate or work against their fellow rulers.

If any of the aboleths survive, remember that these aberrations have long memories. They are certain to seek out the heroes for revenge, especially in Sgothgah's case if the savant escapes death. If the kraken itself escapes, it retreats into the depths of the sea to complete its growth. Eventually, the beast tops out at 60d10 Hit Dice and Colossal size. What dire, apocalyptic events this scion of Tharizdun might portent are left to you to determine.

This adventure owes its origins to eating teacakes in a warm cafe at the end of a pier a mile from land, watching the stormy waves froth around the burnt stumps of the old pier and wondering what lies beneath in the depths of the ocean. Massive thanks to James for the praise, ideas, and aboleths, and continuing hatred to Greg Vaughan for writing the adventures I wish I had.

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Follow the Path
The Shackled City
Adventure Path

Life's Bazaar

(Levels 1–3)

By Christopher Perkins

Enter the city of Cauldron, a metropolis recently besieged by a rash of disappearances. The citizens are nervous, but the abductions became personal when four orphans vanished from their beds three nights ago. The lord mayor is stumped, and the city needs new heroes to uncover the mystery of the lost Cauldronites.

Test of the Smoking Eye

(Levels 10–12)

By David Noonan

The manipulative Cagewrights make the PCs their latest pawns in a gambit that leads all the way to the Abyss. The heroes must complete the test of Adimarchus, a deposed demon lord, to ensure the safety of Cauldron and all its citizens. Will a member of the party bind himself to the Abyss to save the city he loves?

Flood Season

(Levels 4–6)

By James Jacobs

The PCs race from Cauldron to a wayside inn to rescue the High Priest of St. Cuthbert from a pack of bandits. What they discover there leads them to a dungeon below the city itself, and a plot to sink Cauldron beneath the gathering rains of winter.

Zenith Trajectory

(Levels 6–8)

By David Noonan

A decade ago, the dwarf hero Zenith Splintershield led a mercenary army into the Underdark and never returned. Today, his father sets the PCs on his trail, which leads to the dreadful kuo-toa city of Bhal-Hamatugn and a secret that will shake the foundations of Cauldron.

The Demonskar Legacy

(Levels 8–10)

By Tito Leati

After a riot erupts on the streets of Cauldron, the PCs must track down a missing paladin before the city tears itself apart. In so doing, they learn of the Cagewrights, an evil cult at the heart of Cauldron's troubles.

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Secrets of the Soul Pillars

(Levels 12–13)

By Jesse Decker

An assassination attempt against the PCs points to the Cathedral of Wee Jas, stronghold of the vicious Cagewrights. Deep below the city, etched into pillars of undead flesh, the secret plot against Cauldron is inscribed. Will the PCs survive the dracolich that guards it?

Thirteen Cages

(Levels 16–18)

By Chris Thomasson

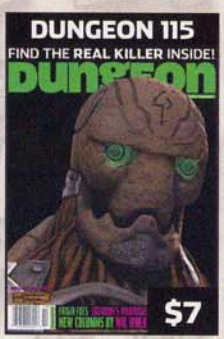
At last! The PCs track down the insidious Cagewrights for a final showdown in their lair deep beneath the volcano of Cauldron. But who secretly leads the cult's inner circle, and what will his final message mean for the PCs?

Lords of Oblivion

(Levels 13–15)

By Christopher Perkins

The PCs must rescue an ally from the Last Laugh thieves' guild, where they learn of a secret Cagewright meeting attended by Cauldron's corrupt leadership. The PCs learn how Cauldron's enemies feel about uninvited guests.



Strike on Shatterhorn

(Levels 18–19)

By Christopher Perkins

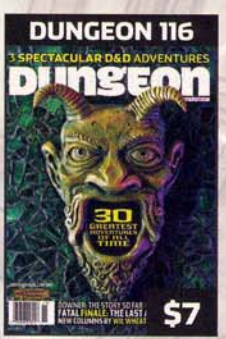
The Cagewrights' trail leads to the abandoned yuan-ti stronghold of Shatterhorn, where the PCs put remaining Cagewrights to the sword. But the puppetmaster behind their evil schemes lies beyond the planar veil in the Prison Plane of Carceri.

Foundation of Flame

(Levels 15–16)

By Chris Thomasson

All hell breaks loose as the long-dormant volcano below Cauldron sputters to life. The PCs must deal with the terrible consequences, ushering citizens to safety and negotiating fiend-filled streets littered with collapsed buildings. And in this time of chaos, who will lead what's left of the city?



Asylum

(Levels 19–20)

By Christopher Perkins

The mad asylum Skullrot squats on the plains of Carceri, a hideous edifice of bone and misery. At long last the PCs get a chance to destroy the demon lord Adimarchus, but to do so they must release him from his centuries-long imprisonment. Will the Shackled City survive? Will the PCs?

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SECRETS OF THE ARCH WOOD

BY SKIP WILLIAMS
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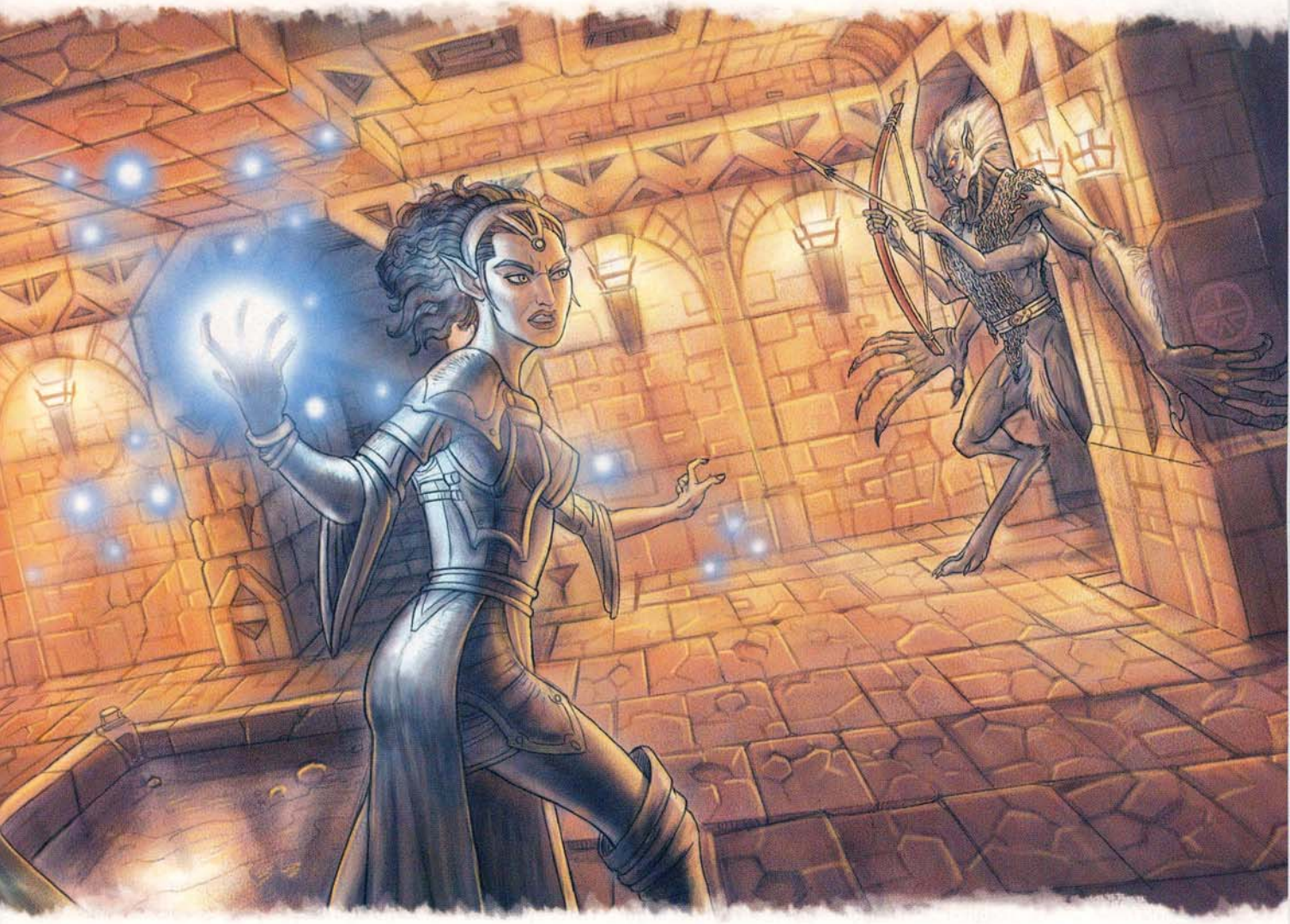
BY ROBERT LAZZARETTI

FORGOTTEN REALMS, HIGH-LEVEL (13TH–20TH), DUNGEON CRAWL



A few years ago, the swords of Archendale began logging a section of the Arch Wood near their borders. After a year of work, however, the logging abruptly ceased, and Archendale's rulers provided no explanation. Now, what started as a disrupted logging expedition is about to become much more serious.

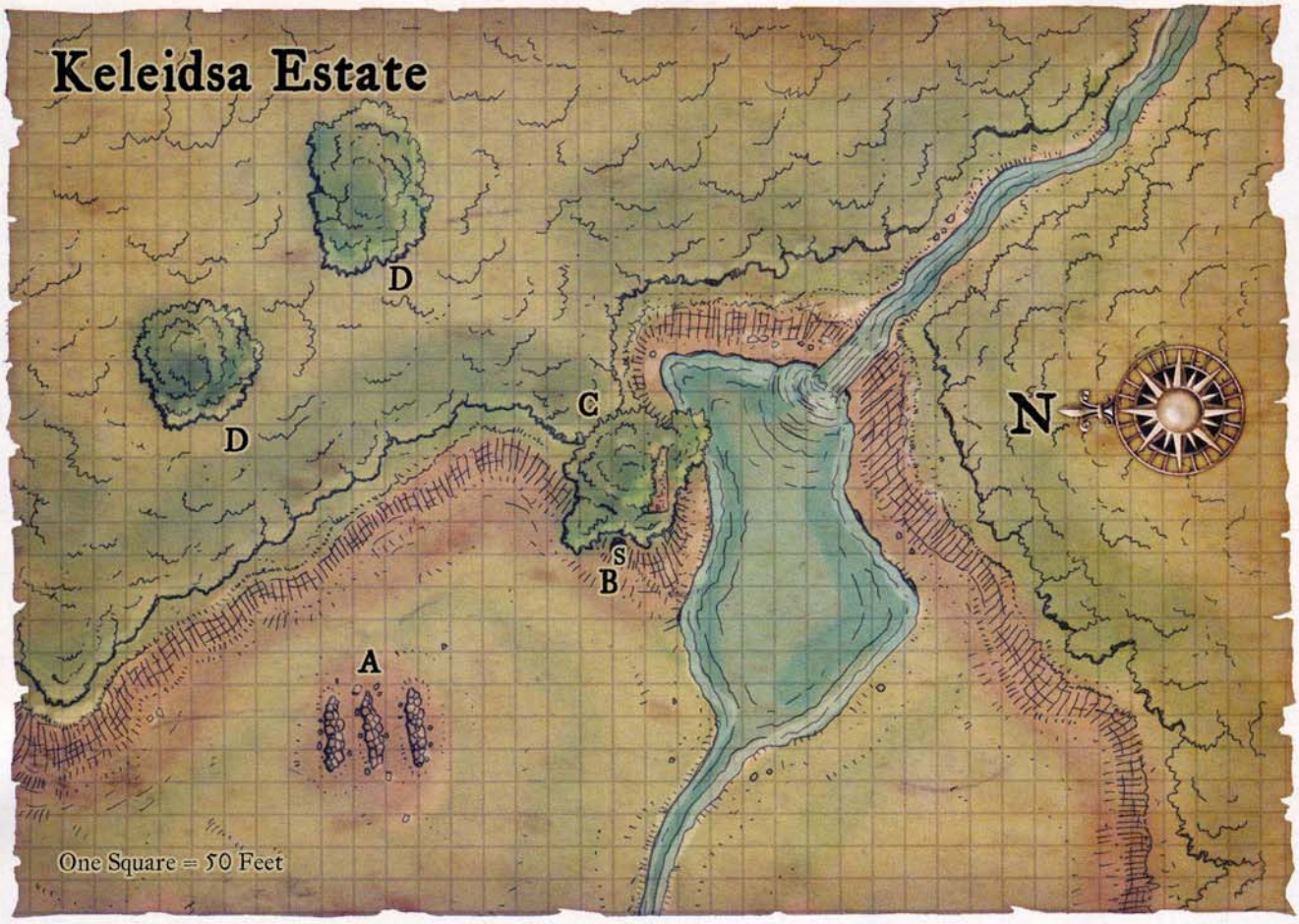
"Secrets of the Arch Wood" is a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventure designed for four 13th-level characters. It's set in the FORGOTTEN REALMS, but its limited scope makes it easy to adapt to other campaign worlds.

Adventure Background

The Keleidsas were a family of devoted elf chauvinists who fled Myth Drannor when the city opened its arms to people of all races in 261 DR. Years later, the Keleidsas were heavily involved in the wars that brought about the city's fall and the subsequent Retreat of the elves from the world. They preferred the company of drow over nonelves, and secretly aided drow surface raiders in an attempt to expunge the taint of nonelf influences. After the fall of Myth Drannor and the defeat of the fiends responsible for destroying the city, the Keleidsas dispersed to their various family holdings throughout the ancient forest of Cormanthor, to lie low and wait for an opportunity to rise from the ashes.

The full extent of the Keleidsas' treacheries may never be known, but enough senior members of the house were implicated in nefarious plots over the years to disgrace the family. The nonevil Keleidsas renounced their house ties and joined the Retreat, fleeing to Evermeet and saying goodbye to mainland Faerûn forever. A few more noble-minded elders became baelnorns (a variety of good-aligned lich), mostly to guard the house's abandoned properties against the possible return of the house's more infamous members.

Quamara Keleidsa is one of these black sheep. She recently returned to one of her family's abandoned estates in the Arch Wood under a cloak of secrecy, bringing with her numerous horrifying minions. Quamara has not been idle in the intervening years. Through dark sorcery she was able to merge her body and soul with that of a green dragon, transforming herself into a half-dragon. Soon after arriving at the Arch Wood estate, Quamara and her servants defeated the guardian baelnorn and looted the treasury. Keleidsa now uses the place as a hideout while plotting her next move. Her minions have already raided a few caravans passing through the Archendale area, and she has kidnapped several artisans from the towns of Archenbridge and White



Ford to help restore the estate to its former glory. Quamara has also welcomed agents from Sembia and the Cormanthor drow House Jaelre. So far, little has come of these negotiations, but given time Quamara's presence could have terrible consequenses for the rest of Archendale.

Adventure Summary

Drawn by rumors of strange goings on, the player characters arrive in the Arch Wood. When they investigate, they find that a long-abandoned elven estate has been reclaimed by one of the scions of house Keleidsa, a half-dragon elf named Quamara. In order to prevent her from settling in and using the estate as a base of operations, the PCs must defeat her barbarian and half-fiend minions before confronting her and her drow lover in the dungeons below the estate.

Adventure Hooks

For now, Quamara's influence over Arch Wood and its environs is subtle and minor. The old Keleidsa estate isn't exactly on the beaten track, so the PCs need a reason to travel there before the adventure can begin. Three possible hooks are detailed below.

- Pieces of old elven jewelry of a design that predates the elven Retreat have surfaced in Archendale. Some of Quamara's elf minions swiped these jewels from the estate and sold them in the towns of Archenbridge and White Ford. A half-elf historian by the name of Terallo Prylaster found out about them and is worried that bandits have been raiding ancient elven ruins in the Arch Wood. Terallo traced these particular jewels to the Keleidsa estate, and is looking to hire adventurers to travel to the ruined estate to investigate it. If the place has been claimed by bandits, he'd like the PCs to root them out and deal with them before they destroy the ruin.
- While passing through Archendale, the PCs encounter a few of Quamara's elf minions while they're out looking for trouble. The group includes evil moon elf ranger/barbarians and draegloths (see the statistics included later in this adventure). This group has been charged with updating an old map of the region in preparation for one of Quamara's schemes for the area, but they became distracted by the opportunity to inflict some mayhem on the PCs.
- Recently, lumberjacks were forced to abandon their operations in the Arch Wood when Quamara began raiding their logging parties. They convinced the Swords of Archendale to dispatch troops to comb the countryside around the dale for the raiders. A patrol sent to the area containing the old Keleidsa estate has vanished (Quamara and her servants wiped them out). The swords are hesitant about sending in more of their number, but aren't quite as hesitant about hiring the PCs to do the job for them.

THE KELEIDSA ESTATE

The old Keleidsa estate is in the Arch Wood, approximately 20 miles northeast of the town of Archenbridge. A dense stand of oaks, wierwoods, and shadowtops (see the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*, pages 79–80) surrounds the estate, which is located at the edge of a large clearing. Although remote, locating the estate should be fairly easy for a high-level party.

An ancient *mythal* covers the Keleidsa estate. The ancient Keleidsas created this powerful magical aura for protection and to keep their activities secret. The *mythal* suppresses all teleportation spells, divination spells, and planar travel (including astral and ethereal travel) cast or directed anywhere in the estate, including the buildings and the dungeons below. The Keleidsas created a number of *mythal* keys that allowed those who carried them to cast suppressed spells within (or into) the *mythal*. Only one key survives—it's currently in Quamara's possession. The *mythal* requires periodic maintenance to function. Furthermore, the *mythal* fades if no heir of house Keleidsa is in residence or if the estate's trees are cut down. Until Quamara came along, the estate's baelnorn saw to the *mythal*. Quamara eliminated the baelnorn and the PCs are likely to eliminate Quamara, leaving the *mythal* subject to failure in a year or so.

A. Cairns (EL 12)

Three forty-foot-long mounds of stones lie under the trees, fitted closely together without mortar. No weeds grow over the mounds, though a few leaves are scattered on them. Some of the stones sparkle as the breeze stirs the canopy overhead.

Until recently, the baelnorn who guarded the ruins also tended the cairns, keeping them free of debris and weeds. Quamara and her henchmen have no interest in tending graves, and the forest is beginning to grow over the cairns. A successful DC 20 Search check reveals that someone has been keeping the cairns clear until recently. A DC 25 Search check reveals that a few stones have been removed from the southernmost mound and then clumsily replaced. Quamara and her henchmen removed these stones shortly after they took over the ruins, hoping to find some treasure. Doing so brought on the ire of the creatures within the mounds, but the group managed to withdraw without destroying all of them.

Creatures: A group of four greater shadows haunts these cairns. Since discovering the shadows here, Quamara has managed to secure a tentative alliance with them. She hasn't managed to convince them to relocate to the manor itself, and has been sending her draegloth servants over here to cover the cairns with *desecrate* spells in an attempt to curry favor from the undead. These *desecrate* effects function at caster level 6, and one is centered in the middle of each cairn. There's a 5% chance the PCs arrive when three of the draegloth barbarians (see page 74) are here renewing the effects, in which case the half-fiends attack the PCs on sight.

Greater Shadows (4): hp 58 each; *Monster Manual* 221.

Tactics: The shadows stay hidden in the cairns, but emerge and attack if anyone approaches within 20 feet. The *desecrate* effects placed on the cairns grant the shadows a +1 profane bonus on attack rolls, damage rolls, and saving throws. Attempts to turn undead near the cairns have a –3 penalty.

The shadows begin their attacks by moving toward the closest foes and using their touch attacks. They stay mostly hidden in the cairns when attacking, which gives them cover (+4 AC). Once they emerge and get an idea of what they're facing, the shadows cluster around the most heavily armored target, figuring their touch attacks have a better chance against such victims. They fight until destroyed.

Development: Although the trees screen most activity around the mounds from the house's view, the sentries at area **C** note any flashy spell effects used here (such as those produced by *fireball* or *lightning bolt*).

Draegloths assigned to ward the cairns with *desecrate* effects travel from the secret door at area **B** to the mounds and back twice a day. The three draegloths that make the trip leave tracks the PCs can follow as they cross. A DC 19 track check reveals a trail leading from here to area **B**.

Mythal Details

In terms of the *raise mythal* epic spell seed from *Lost Empires of Faerûn*, the estate's *mythal* has the following characteristics:

- Caster level 25
- Radius 600 yards, centered in the library in the main house (area **3**).
- Prevalent *dimensional lock* spell
- Arointed divination school
- *Dimensional lock* and arointed divination keyed to specific mythal keys.
- Anchored and corruptible.
- Spellcraft bonus (for Integrity checks) +36, current Integrity Failure DC 38 (if no Keleidsa is in residence).

B. Secret Cliff Entrance

The cliff is nearly 100 feet high, and it runs for about a mile north and south. The cliff face consists of fractured limestone. Numerous vines and shrubs cling to the rock, giving it a Climb DC of 15.

A well-hidden secret door is located here, almost directly beneath the tree dwelling and area **C**. Characters who have followed the tracks here from area **A** get a +5 circumstance bonus on Search checks to find the door. The door leads to area **10** in the dungeons below the tree house, and is locked.

Secret Stone Door: 6 in. thick; Hardness 8; hp 90; break DC 24, Open Lock DC 25, Search DC 25.

Development: Note that the sentries at area **C** have a fairly good chance to notice activity in this area, even after you apply a –14 penalty for the 140-foot distance from the cliff base to the tree house above.

C. Tree and Main House (EL 11)

An immense and hoary old tree, its trunk sixteen feet in diameter, clings to the earth at the edge of the cliff. Its roots grip the rock like pilings under a bridge. The tree is at least a bowshot tall, and a once elegant

but now dilapidated house perches in the leafy branches about halfway up. It has two stories, each with many broken windows. Long balconies run under the banks of windows on each floor. The building somehow looks like it belongs in the tree, almost as if it had grown there and then died, like a rotten tooth.

Creatures: Three sentries lie concealed among the leaves in the tree's upper branches. These half-dragon trolls were recruited by Quamara several years ago after she completed her own draconic transformation, and they are quite loyal to her. These sentries move about in the tree, so they're never in the same location on repeat visits.

The three half-dragon trolls are charged with keeping an eye on the building and the secret door in the cliff below. The trolls are here around the clock. One is usually asleep, but the other two can awaken a sleeper with a kick to the ribs. If the sentries notice any intruders, two of the sentries are supposed to attack the enemy while the third fetches Quamara or her lover Trizeen from the dungeons. They are ordered to report anything suspicious that they see, hear, or smell in the vicinity.

Sentries, half-green dragon troll warrior 2 (3): CR 8; Large dragon (augmented giant); HD 6d12+48 plus 2d8+16; hp 112 each; Init +2; Spd 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (average); AC 22, touch 11, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +6; Grp +20; Atk +15 melee (1d6+10, claw) or +9 ranged (2d6+4/×3, masterwork composite longbow); Full Atk +15 melee (1d6+10, 2 claws) and +10 melee (1d8+5, bite) or +13/+8 ranged (2d6+4/×3, masterwork composite longbow); SA breath weapon 1/day (30-ft. cone of corrosive gas, 6d6 acid, Reflex DC 21 halves), rend (2d6+15); SQ darkvision 90 ft., immune to acid, sleep, and paralysis, low-light vision, regeneration 5, scent; AL CE; SV Fort +16, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 31, Dex 14, Con 26, Int 8, Wis 9, Cha 8.

Skills: Climb +14, Hide +6, Jump +12, Listen +10, Move Silently +6, Spot +10.

Feats: Alertness, Iron Will, Track.

Languages: Giant.

Possessions: *+1 padded armor*, masterwork composite longbow (+4) with 20 arrows, *cloak of resistance +1*, *potion of resist energy* (fire 10).

Tactics: The sentries are as headstrong and fearless as regular trolls, and they don't follow orders well. They've hidden themselves in the tree as ordered, and when they notice strangers in the area, all three sentries fire their bows. While in the tree, the sentries have cover (+4 AC bonus). Once a foe locates them and aims any sort of attack back at them, the sentries break from cover and fly to the attack. They swoop down at the most formidable-looking foe and try to get within melee reach. They prefer to land and fight so as to rend their victims. The sentries depend on their regeneration abilities to keep them going, but if they accumulate at least 60 points of combined nonlethal and normal damage, they withdraw to the treetop and try to recover a few hit points for a round or two. They drink a *potion of resist energy* once they're subjected to fire attacks. Once they've withdrawn, there's a 50% chance that one troll remembers its orders and sounds the alarm. In any case, the remaining trolls renew their attack after their rest and fight to the death. If the PCs manage to kill two of the trolls, the survivor tries to flee and raise the alarm.

Development: The sentries might notice flashy magic used near the cairns (see the development section in area **A**), and investigate.

If the guards at area **2** in the main house notice combat here, they join in after 1d3+1 rounds, firing on obvious intruders with their bows from the house's lower balcony.

D. Tree and Ruined Buildings

These big wierwood trees once held buildings similar the main house at area **C**. These were guest houses and other outbuildings. They weren't as well built as the main house, and little remains of them save for a few rotted planks in the branches and some wreckage on the forest floor. Wooden walkways once connected these areas with the main house, but they have long since collapsed.

THE KELEIDSA HOUSE

The main house is a two-story structure located about 40 feet above the ground at area **C** on the Keleidsa Estate map. The house's general features are as follows:

Balconies: A hardwood railing, waist high to an elf, runs along the balconies' outer edges. In typical elven fashion, the railings are both attractive and practical. A railing has the same statistics as the house walls. A Small or Medium creature standing behind a railing has cover (+4 AC). Smaller creatures have improved cover (+8 AC). Treat a prone, sitting, or kneeling creature as one size smaller. For example, a Medium creature could kneel behind a railing and get improved cover.

Ceilings: Ceilings are 8 feet high on both floors.

Doors: Exterior doors are reinforced wood and once had locks—locks that no longer function unless noted otherwise in the area description. Interior doors are simple wood and do not have locks.

Strong Wooden Doors: 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 20; Break DC 25; Open Lock DC 20.

Simple Wooden Doors: 1 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 10; Break DC 15.

Floors: All the floors in the house are made of timbers about 2 feet thick and covered with smooth hardwood planks. The floors allow unimpeded movement except in a few places where debris has accumulated. These are noted in the individual area descriptions.

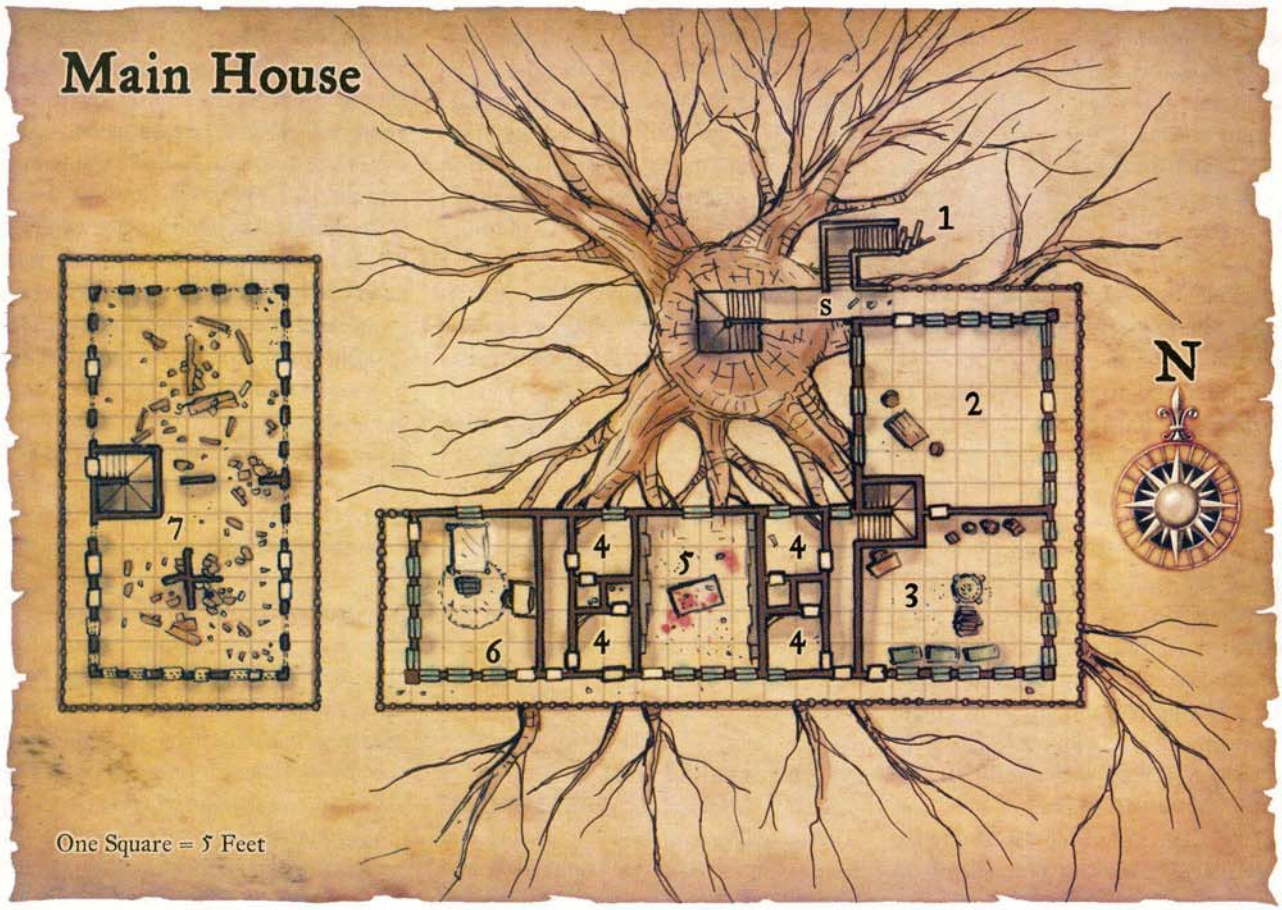
House Floors: 2 ft. thick; Hardness 5; hp 240; Break DC 24.

Light: Any room with a window has at least bright illumination (see page 165 the *Player's Handbook*) during daylight hours. Some areas are less brightly lit because they have few windows or shaded windows, as noted in their descriptions.

Walls: The house's interior and exterior walls are wood. The walls have weathered to a silver gray inside and out, but they're still sound, with fairly smooth surfaces.

House Walls: 1 ft. thick; Hardness 5; hp 120; Break DC 22; Climb DC 21.

Windows: The house's many windows are about 3 feet square and fitted with crystal-clear leaded glass and wooden



shutters that roll down on the outside like blinds. The windows can be opened for ventilation, but can be closed and latched to keep them from blowing open in severe weather.

Likewise, the shutters can be closed and barred to keep the building snug in bad weather. Most of the windows are broken, but the shutters still work. Rooms that have intact windows are noted in the individual room descriptions. Normally the windows are kept closed while the shutters remain open.

An open window provides cover just as a balcony railing does.

Wooden Shutters: 1 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 10; Break DC 13 (15 if barred).

Glass Window Panes: 1/4-in. thick; Hardness 1; hp 1; Break DC 5.

The Tree: A wooden staircase once linked area **1** to the ground, but the stairs have long since fallen away. It's possible to climb the massive tree trunk, which has rough bark covered with fairly slippery moss. Its Climb DC is 16.

1. Landing and Secret Door

A fragment of an old, wooden staircase dangles from the mighty tree like a broken limb, creaking ominously as the wind blows. The broken stairs end in a sturdy-looking landing with a short flight of stairs leading to an equally sturdy-looking balcony above. At the top of the stairs is an intact wooden door and a row of broken windows beyond.

The broken stairs below the landing can't bear much weight, and they break away if subjected to more than 20 pounds of weight. The stairs, and anything on them, fall 70 feet to the forest floor below, resulting in 7d6 points of falling damage.

A secret door south of the landing leads to a spiral staircase that drops about 140 feet to area **1** in the dungeons below.

Secret Wooden Door: 6 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 60; Break DC 27, Open Lock DC 25, Search DC 25.

2. Guardpost (EL 10)

This airy chamber smells of leaf mold and damp wood. Windows line three sides, but only the windows facing the tree trunk to the west are intact. The remaining widows have only a few shards of glass left in their weathered frames.

The Keleidsas used this room as a parlor—its windows offered a stupendous view of the land below the cliff. The room's once exquisite furnishings were removed long ago. Now, only a crude wooden table, a few rickety chairs, and a couple of crates and barrels of food and drink decorate its interior.

Creatures: Quamara has placed two elven guards in this room, ordering them to keep watch on the secret door at area **1** and to keep an eye on the troll sentries in the tree above and around the house (area **C** on the estate map). Because the trolls hide in the tree's foliage most of the time, the guards have given up watching them. Instead, they

spend their time sitting at the table, eating, drinking, swapping tall tales, or just staring out the windows. They're wise enough to eat and drink only sparingly and talk quietly, so as not to immediately reveal their presence to anyone sneaking around. If they spot intruders, they attack immediately.

Keleidsa Guards, male moon elf ranger 3/barbarian 5 (2): CR 8; Medium humanoid; HD 3d8+3 plus 5d12+5; hp 54; Init +5; Spd 40 ft.; AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +8, Grp +11; Atk +13 melee (2d6+5/19–20, *+1 greatsword*) or +12 ranged (1d8+2/×3, masterwork composite longbow); Full Atk +13/+8 melee (2d6+5/19–20, *+1 greatsword*); or +12/+7 ranged (1d8+2/×3, masterwork composite longbow); SA favored enemy (humans) +2, rage 2/day; SQ elf traits, fast movement, improved uncanny dodge, low-light vision, uncanny dodge, trap sense +2, wild empathy +2; AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +3; Str 16, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills: Climb +8, Hide +8, Intimidate +7, Jump +8, Listen +13, Move Silently +8, Ride +7, Search +2, Spot +11, Survival +7.

Feats: Blooded (regional feat: +2 initiative, +2 Spot, cannot become shaken), Dodge, Endurance[B], Rapid Shot[B], Track[B], Weapon Focus (greatsword).

Languages: Common, Elven.

Rage (Ex): hp 69; AC 18, touch 12, flat-footed 18; Grp +13; Atk +15 melee (2d6+8/19–20, *+1 greatsword*); Full Atk +15/+10 melee (2d6+8/19–20, *+1 greatsword*); SV Fort +10, Will +5; Str 20, Con 16; Climb +10, Jump +10.

Possessions: +1 chain shirt, +1 greatsword, masterwork composite longbow (+2) with 20 arrows, *ring of protection +1, potion of shield of faith (+3).*

Tactics: In a fight, the elves fire their bows, using the windows or the crates and barrels in this room as cover. If melee seems inevitable, they drink their *potions of shield of faith*, rage, and attack with their swords.

If a fight here lasts longer than two rounds, additional moon elf guards from areas **3**, **4**, and **5** soon arrive as reinforcements.

Development: A captured guard remains unfriendly toward his captors, and won't provide any useful information unless he's made helpful with a successful DC 40 Diplomacy or Intimidate check. If successfully pressed for information, the guards reveal the location of the secret door at area **B** on the estate map and offer to lead the PCs there to open the door. They refer to their leader as "the dragon lady," but refuse to go into much more detail than that. They have a pretty good idea what forces Quamara has at her disposal, but these guards haven't seen all of the dragon lady's henchmen together at once and have no idea what's in the dungeons right now. They know there are several demons down there (the draegloths), along with "the dragon lady's pretty-boy" (Trizeen). They also know that there's a sealed area in the dungeon that holds some kind of ghost or other vengeful spirit (this is speculation, but the guards believe it because Quamara does).

3. Barracks (EL 12)

This chamber smells of sweat, oil, and wood smoke. Banks of windows to the east and south seem mostly intact, though here and there a wooden shutter has been pulled down over a broken window. A brazier full of ash stands in the chamber's center, along with a stack of firewood. A bank of bunks, four wide and two high, stands against the south wall. A crude table, several chairs, and a collection of crates and barrels round out the room's contents.

This room was once a library. If the PCs pull away the bunks, they find floor-to-ceiling bookshelves built into the walls. There are a few books left on these shelves, but decades of neglect have left them in ruins.

Creatures: Originally, eight guards called this chamber home. Most of them have since claimed the more comfortable rooms to the west (area **4**). Now, the guards use this room to gather to eat, talk, and gamble.

At any given time, 1d8 Keleidsa guards are in this room, killing time. Any that aren't here are scattered through area **4** and area **5**.

Keleidsa Guards: hp 54; see page 71.

4. Bedchambers (EL varies)

These small chambers served as bedchambers when the house was in use. Most still have intact windows, small fireplaces, and sturdy bed frames built into the walls.

Creatures: As noted earlier, many of the guards on duty in the house have taken the opportunity to refurbish these rooms and move in. They've piled pine boughs on the beds, cleaned out the fireplaces, and settled right in. A total of eight guards share these four rooms, and any that aren't encountered in area **3** or area **5** are in one of these rooms, likely sleeping.

Keleidsa Guards: hp 54; see page 71.

5. Kitchen (EL 0 or 8–10)

The air in this room smells heavily of wood smoke and burnt grease. Stone tiles cover the floor, but they're slippery with entrails and blood. Several half-dressed animal carcasses hang from the ceiling. Smoke-stained cabinets line the east and west walls, and a bloodstained table stands in the chamber's center. A bank of windows, mostly broken, fills the south wall, and the single window in the north wall is broken as well.

The kitchen includes a fireplace to the right of the window in the north wall and a brick oven to the left of the window. Both the oven and fireplace work, but their damaged chimneys and deteriorating brickwork make them smoke quite a bit. The guards enjoy hunting in their off hours and use this room to prepare the meat. They also use the fireplace and oven to dry and smoke the meat for future use. The guards are none too cleanly when it comes to their culinary work, hence the room's condition.

Creatures: There's a 25% chance that two Keleidsa guards are encountered here, preparing food.

Keleidsa Guards: hp 54; see page 71.

6. Guest Room

Intact windows line this chamber's east and south walls, and they provide a

stunning view of the wooded countryside. A single window in the north wall reveals leafy branches from the great tree that supports the house. The chamber's wooden walls are clean and freshly varnished, and a thick rug covers the floor. A four-poster bed with a canopy and immaculate linens sits under the north window. An ironbound chest sits, open, at the foot of the bed. There's also a hardwood desk, a comfortable chair, and big armoire with expensive-looking inlays and a mirrorlike shine.

This room serves as temporary quarters for Quamara's guests and prospective allies. Quamara requires her servants to keep this room in tiptop condition, so her guests can feel properly welcome. Most of the furnishings in here were looted from elsewhere on the estate, but the rug came from a caravan Quamara recently raided. Artisans Quamara kidnapped from Archendale were forced to restore the room's interior and the furnishings. After the abductees had done their work, Quamara killed them and dumped their bodies in the woods.

Treasure: A search of this room reveals a few clues about its recent occupants. The desk contains a key ring with a key to the chest, and also a small supply of writing materials (fine linen paper, pens, ink, and sealing wax) worth 45 gp in all. There's also a half a bottle of fine Sembian wine worth 20 gp (as long as the bottle isn't opened). A DC 20 Appraise check, or a DC 15 Knowledge (local) check reveals its origin and the fact that Sembia is known as wine producer, but not necessarily a wine exporter. In fact, a Sembian merchant left it here a few weeks ago. A few Sembian merchant houses have taken note of Quamara's activities and they've been negotiating with the half-dragon to keep their own caravans safe from Quamara's raids and perhaps to get her help in undermining Archendale.

The furnishings in here are heavy, but most of them are valuable. The rug weighs 80 pounds and is worth 1,200 gp. The desk weighs 100 pounds and is worth 200 gp. The armoire weighs 120 pounds and is worth 2,000 gp.

Sword Spider

7. Upper Floor (EL 13)

Though this area has a roof, it might as well be in the open air. Banks of shattered windows line the four walls, letting in the sounds and smells of the surrounding forest. Splintered timber lies in heaps all over the floor, and partially ruined walls sag among the debris. Patches of mold cling to the ceiling in places, and dozens of small forest animal skeletons lie heaped near a spiral staircase leading up from below.

This area was once divided into several chambers, but it suffered heavy damage in the attacks on the estate and most of the interior walls have been destroyed. Treat the debris piled on the floor as light rubble (see page 60 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

Creatures: A visitor from the drow house Jaelare left a gift for Quamara—a clutch of sword spider eggs. The drow suggested that Quamara use them as guardians or pets once they hatched, but when they did the spiders quickly proved to be not only furiously fast growers, but terribly unmanageable to boot. Quamara's drow lover convinced her to not destroy them; instead, she ordered the spiders herded up into these ruined upper rooms.

These spiders spend their days (and nights) hiding in the debris. Once every few days, Quamara's servants come up here bearing live animals for the spiders to eat (hence the skeletons near the staircase). The spiders have become sensitive to any motion on the stairs and become ready to feed whenever they hear anything approach. They charge the first living things to set foot on the upper floor and fight to the death, unless fresh food is immediately thrown to them.

A sword spider has a sleek, hairy black body, striped with dark brown fur. Its legs have chitinous plates with raised, sharp ridges that cut like sword blades.

Advanced sword spiders (2): CR 11; Huge vermin; HD 16d8+64; hp 136 each; Init +0; Spd 20 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 19, touch 7, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +12; Grp +28; Atk +19 melee (1d8+8, leg); Full Atk +19 melee (1d8+8, 8 legs) and +14 melee (2d6+4 plus poison, bite); Space/Reach 15 ft./10 ft.; SA impalement, poison; SQ darkvision 60 ft., vermin traits; AL N; SV Fort +14, Ref +5, Will +5; Str 26, Dex 11, Con 18, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 3.

Skills: Climb +16, Hide –4, Jump +8, Spot +12.

Impalement (Ex): As a standard action, a sword spider can use all eight of its legs against a single target. To do so, it makes a single attack (+19 melee). If it hits, the opponent takes damage from three legs (3d8+24) if he is Small or smaller, damage from four legs (4d8+32) if Medium, damage from five legs (5d8+40) if Large, six (6d8+48) if huge, and all eight (8d8+64) if Gargantuan or larger. If the spider descends more than 20 feet to make this attack, it adds +1 point of damage per leg that inflicts damage.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 22, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Strength. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Development: Any fighting up here alerts the guards on the lower floor. The guards have no desire to face the spiders, however, and don't investigate until all is quiet.

THE KELEIDSA DUNGEONS

The dungeons lie directly below the main house, nestled in the bedrock below the tree's roots above. The elves built these subterranean chambers mostly as a place of retreat, though the area includes catacombs for their dead. After the fall of house Keleidsa, the estate's guardian baelnorn dwelt here for a time before being destroyed by Quamara and her minions.

The dungeon's general features include:

Ceilings: The vaulted ceilings rise from 5 feet high near the walls to 10 feet high at the center of the chambers and corridors.

Doors: The doors are made of stone and have no locks, but are fitted with bolts allowing most of them to be bolted shut from the inside.

Stone Doors: 4 in. thick; Hardness 8; hp 60; open DC 10, Break DC (when bolted) 28.

Floors: In most areas, floors are smooth stone, allowing unimpeded movement. In areas **9–10**, floors are natural stone and hamper movement somewhat. It takes 2 squares of movement to enter a square with a natural stone floor, and the DC of Balance and Tumble checks increases by 5.

Light: Rooms and corridors are completely dark unless some kind of artificial light is present. The boxed text assumes the viewer is using darkvision or a portable light source.

Secret Doors: These are just like the regular stone doors except that they aren't fitted with bolts and it takes a DC 25 Search check to find them. A few of the secret doors are one way. When a one-way door is closed, it cannot be found or opened from it's "back" side, though it can still be broken open.

Walls: In most areas, walls are smooth stone, hewn from the cliff, but chiseled smooth. In areas **9–10**, walls are natural stone, The statistics below are for typical walls in each section.

Smooth Hewn Walls: 5 ft. thick; Hardness 8; hp 900; Break DC 65; Climb DC 22.

Natural Stone Walls: 5 ft. thick; Hardness 8; hp 900; Break DC 65; Climb DC 20.

1. Stairwell

These stairs rise about 140 feet to area **1** in the main house.

2. Spring Chamber (EL 12)

The air in here is damp and cool. A small, rectangular pool near the chamber's western end holds clear water. A raised stone border a few inches wide rims the pool. The basin looks about as wide as an elf is tall and perhaps twice as long, but its rippling surface hides its true depth.

An underground spring fills a shallow pool here that has provided the estate with clear, cold water for decades. The pool is 10 feet deep and has sheer sides. Anyone stepping into the pool without first checking its depth falls in and may drown unless the character can make a DC 10 Swim check. Clambering out of the pool requires a DC 5 Climb check.

Creatures: A pair of dangerous half-fiends known as draegloths stands guard in this chamber. Created by vile rituals practiced by the drow, a draegloth looks vaguely like an 8-foot-tall drow elf, with inky black skin and a mane of yellowish-white hair. Its body is powerfully muscled, and its face has a bestial cast. Two of its four arms end in powerful claws; the other two, much smaller, end in normal hands. These draegloth are part of a larger group that serves Trizeen (and by extension, his lover Quamara), and act as advance guards for the dungeon.

Draegloth barbarian 5 (2): CR 10; Large outsider (chaotic, evil, native); HD 6d8+24 plus 5d12+20; hp 103 each; Init +4; Spd 40 ft.; AC 24, touch 13, flat-footed 24; Base Atk +11; Grp +23; Atk +18 melee (1d6+8, claw) or +15 ranged (1d8+9/×3, *+1 composite longbow*); Full Atk +18 melee (1d6+8, 2 claws) and +13 melee (1d8+4, bite) or +15/+10/+5 ranged (1d8+8/×3, *+1 composite longbow*); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA rage 2/day, spell-like abilities; SQ darkvision 120 ft., drow traits, fast movement, immune to poison and sleep effects, improved uncanny dodge, resistance to acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, and fire 10, spell resistance 16, uncanny dodge; AL CE; SV Fort +13, Ref +10, Will +7 (+9 against spells and spell-like abilities); Str 27, Dex 18, Con 18, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills: Climb +12, Concentration +13, Hide +12, Intimidate +9, Jump +25, Knowledge (religion) +10, Listen +15, Move Silently +12, Search +10, Spellcraft +10, Spot +10.

Feats: Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Power Attack.

Languages: Abyssal, Undercommon.

Spell-like Abilities (caster level 6): 4/day—*darkness*; 1/day—*dancing lights, desecrate, faerie fire, unholy blight* (DC 13); 4/day *darkness*.

Rage (Ex): hp 125 each; AC 23, touch 11, flat-footed 23; Grp +25; Atk +20 melee (1d6+10, claw) or +15 ranged (1d8+9/×3, *+1 composite longbow*); Full Atk +20 melee (1d6+10, 2 claws) and +15 melee (1d8+5, bite) or +15/+10/+5 ranged (1d8+8/×3, *+1 composite longbow*); SV Fort +15, Will +9 (+11 against spells and spell-like abilities); Str 31, Con 22; Climb +14, Concentration +15, Jump +27.

Possessions: *+2 chain shirt, +1 composite longbow* (+8 Str) with 20 arrows.

Tactics: The draegloths sit in the dark on either side of the doors leading to the stairs at area **1** and listen for any noise on the stairs. Legitimate visitors

are expected to halt about 20 feet from the bottom and announce their business and identities.

If they hear intruders approaching unannounced, the draegloths prepare for a fight. One moves to area **3** and thumps the doors, alerting the draegloths inside. The other draegloth casts *darkness* in the stairwell, then moves to block the doorway. When foes arrive at the base of the stairs, the draegloth at the doorway strikes at the base of the stairs. Its Blind-Fight feat makes attacking unseen targets a fairly reliable tactic. The draegloths, and their allies from area **3**, try to keep the intruders in the stairwell as long as they can. If a foe presses into the room, any remaining draegloths rage and attack.

Should foes enter this room by another route, one draegloth fires its bow at the invaders while the other closes in for melee.

Development: If combat begins, the draegloths in area **3** hear and move into this area in 1d2 rounds if they haven't already been called. If Quamara and Trizeen are in area **7** or **8** when a fight starts here, they'll join the battle in 1d3+1 rounds, but retreat to one of the area **7** locations if the battle turns against them.

3. Sleeping Rooms (EL 8)

This dank space reeks of half-eaten food and unwashed bodies. A jumble of old crates and barrels topped with scraps of filthy cloth and fur lies against the far wall.

The doors leading into these rooms from area **2** are bolted shut from this side. The crates and barrels are empty. The draegloths use the piles of rags and furs as beds, but none of the bedding is valuable.

Creatures: One draegloth barbarian sleeps or rests in each of these two chambers, but they are quick to rouse to battle if summoned by the sounds of combat in area **2**.

Draegloth barbarian 5: hp 103; see page 74.

Tactics: The draegloths in these chambers sleep in their armor and can hop out of bed and be ready to fight with their natural weaponry immediately. If faced with opponents bursting into their rooms, the draegloth simply gets to its feet, rages, and attacks the nearest foe, not bothering to retrieve its bow. If they have more time to prepare for a fight, they collect their weapons and use the tactics described in area **2**.

4. Funerary Chapel

A pair of flickering torches lights this small chamber. Contoured stone benches are built into the walls, with realistic mosaics depicting moonlit woodland scenes covering the walls above them. The pleasant décor stands in marked contrast to the grisly debris piled on the floor. Chunks of dark marble, broken weaponry, moldy cloth, and jumbled bones—including several grinning skulls—lie in an untidy heap. The whole room has a sickly smell.

This chamber originally served as a place for quiet meditation and honoring the dead. Now, it's piled with the contents of the crypts looted from area **5**. There's nothing of value left in the heap of debris—Quamara has seen to that.

The two torches are both everburning torches. The sickly smell comes from a pool similar to the one in area **2**, except this pool is only 5 feet square and 5 feet deep. Quamara and her henchmen used the pool as a dump for bones and other non-valuable items looted from area **5**. These debris completely obscure the pool now, though characters who walk over the central section of the room must make a DC 15 Reflex save to avoid stumbling and falling prone in the surprisingly deep rubble and junk. A fall in the junk does 1d6 points of damage, but also inflicts the victim with filth fever (*Dungeon Master's Guide* 292) if a DC 12 Fortitude save is failed.

5. Catacombs (EL 7)

The corridor ahead is lined with shallow niches, making the place look a little like a bizarre honeycomb. The niches are about two feet high, six feet long, and a little more than two feet deep, and they're stacked up in columns of four, like tightly packed bunk beds. The niches are all empty, but the shattered remains of gray marble coverings still cling to some of them.

Shallow niches line both sides of these corridors, as shown on the map. The deceased members of House Keleidsa, both good and evil, were interred here over the years. Originally, each niche was covered over with stone slabs bearing the names of the deceased. Quamara and her henchmen have completely looted about 2/3 of the niches; only those in the southern corridor are still intact.

The southern corridor looks about the same, except that the memorial slabs over the burial niches are still intact. Quamara called a halt to the destruction because the looted bodies haven't yielded much treasure, and several of them have been trapped and caused more trouble than they're worth. To discourage her servants from breaking into the last set of niches on their own, she lied to them and mentioned her fears that an ancient guardian, perhaps a ghost dragon, awaits release somewhere in the final corridor. The lie's worked so far; her minions have avoided the southernmost tunnel completely.

There are forty unopened burial niches in the southern corridor. Each niche is sealed with a stone slab that must be broken or forcibly pulled out to get to the contents beyond.

Niche Covers: 4 in. thick; Hardness 8; hp 60; Open DC 22.

Trap: Not all of the niches are trapped. Each niche has a 20% chance to be trapped, and no more than eight niches in all are trapped. All of these traps are magical in nature, so a *detect magic* can quickly determine which of the burial niches are dangerous. If a niche is trapped, roll 1d6 and consult the following table to determine what kind of trap guards the contents within.

d6 Roll	Result
1–2	*Blade Barrier*: When triggered, a *blade barrier* springs into being down the length of the southern hallway. All creatures in the hallway are exposed to the blades.
3–4	*Summon Monster*: This trap summons a bralani eladrin that immediately attacks anyone in the immediate area. The eladrin breaks off its attack if it is commanded to stand down in Elven by an elf—otherwise it fights to the death.
5–6	*Chain Lightning*: This trap creates a *chain lightning* that targets up to 12 creatures in the southern hall.

***Blade Barrier* Trap**: CR 7; magic device; proximity trigger (*alarm*); automatic reset, spell effect (*blade barrier*, 11th-level cleric, 11d6 slashing, DC 19 Reflex save half damage); Search DC 31; Disable Device DC 31.

***Summon Monster VI* Trap**: CR 7; magic device; proximity trigger (*alarm*); no reset, spell effect (*summon monster VI*, 11th-level cleric, summons a bralani eladrin); Search DC 31; Disable Device DC 31.

Bralani Eladrin: hp 45; *Monster Manual* 93.

***Chain Lightning* Trap**: CR 7; magic device; proximity trigger (*alarm*); automatic reset, spell effect (*chain lightning*, 11th-level cleric, 11d6 electricity to target nearest trap plus 5d6 electricity to each of up to eleven secondary targets, DC 19 Reflex save half damage); Search DC 31; Disable Device DC 31.

Treasure: Each trapped burial niche contains 3d6×10 gp in jewelry, draped over the bones of an ancient elf.

6. Parlor (EL 14)

Decadent tapestries of geometric patterns line the walls of this snug chamber, matching a carpet that covers the floor. A golden brazier with leaping flames provides light, but little heat. Two divans with leather upholstery sit on either side of the brazier, facing each other.

This area once served as a summoning chamber, and traces of a magical diagram remain on the floor under the expensive carpet. Quamara and Trizeen have turned it into a parlor where they can relax together.

The door leading to area **2** is kept bolted from this side. The doors leading to area **7** have no bolts on this side.

Creatures: At any given time, there is a 75% chance that Quamara and Trizeen are in here relaxing. There is a 25% chance that one of them is present (determine which randomly) while the other sleeps in area **7**. If neither Quamara nor Trizeen are present they can be found in one of the area **7** bedrooms. The leaders of this band of mercenaries and draegloths, Quamara and Trizeen would rather let their minions take care of problems (like intruding adventurers), but if they hear combat erupt in area **2**, they prepare for the inevitable as detailed in Tactics below.

Quamara, female half-green dragon moon elf fighter 2/sorcerer 9: CR 13; Medium dragon (augmented humanoid); HD 2d10+2 plus 9d4+9; hp 49; Init +5; Spd 40 ft.; AC 21, touch 14, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +6; Grapple +10; Atk +11 melee (2d4+7, *+1 spell storing spiked chain*) or +10 ranged (1d8+4/×3, masterwork

composite longbow); Full Atk +11/+6 melee (2d4+6, *+1 spell storing spiked chain*) and +5 melee (1d6+2, bite) or +10/+5 ranged (1d8+4/×3, masterwork composite longbow); SA breath weapon 1/day (30-ft. cone of corrosive gas, 6d6 acid, Reflex DC 19 half), spells; SQ darkvision 60 ft., immunity to acid, sleep and paralysis, low-light vision; AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +6, Will +7; Str 18, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 19.

Skills: Bluff +22, Climb +9, Concentration +13, Diplomacy +10, Disguise +10 (+12 acting), Intimidate +14, Jump +16, Listen +5, Search +4, Spellcraft +6, Spot +7, Swim +9.

Feats: Blooded (regional feat: +2 initiative, +2 Spot, cannot become shaken), Combat Expertise[B], Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (spiked chain)[B], Heighten Spell, Improved Disarm.

Languages: Common, Draconic, Giant, Elven, Undercommon.

Sorcerer Spells Known: (6/7/7/7/5, caster level 9): 0—*acid splash* (+9 ranged touch), *arcane mark*, *detect magic*, *electric jolt* (+9 ranged touch), *mage hand*, *message*, *resistance*, *read magic*; 1st—*chill touch* (+10 melee touch, DC 15), *disguise self* (DC 15), *ice dagger* (DC 15), *magic missile*, *shield*; 2nd—*battering ram* (+9 ranged), *blindsight*, *detect thoughts* (DC 16), *shatter*; 3rd—*displacement*, *fly*, *Nybor's mild admonishment* (DC 17); 4th—*dimension door*, *viscid glob* (DC 18).

Possessions: *+1 spell storing spiked chain* (currently stores *Nybor's mild admonishment*), masterwork composite longbow (+4 Strength) with 20 arrows, *amulet of natural armor +1*, *bracers of armor +2*, *ring of protection +1*, *boots of striding and springing*, *cloak of Charisma +2*, *circlet of persuasion*, *potion of cure serious wounds*, 3 *potions of cure light wounds*, estate mythal key (resembles a dragon's head, made from cast bronze and enameled in green), secret door key, trunk key, 25 gp.

Spell Substitutions

Quamara knows several spells from *Magic of Faerûn*, *Player's Guide to Faerûn*, and *Underdark*. If you don't have access to these books, substitute these spells with the following spells from the *Player's Handbook*.

Spell	Source	Replacement Spell
Battering ram	*Magic of Faerûn*	*Scorching ray*
Blindsight	*Player's Guide to Faerûn*	*Detect thoughts*
Electric jolt	*Magic of Faerûn*	*Ray of frost*
Ice dagger	*Magic of Faerûn*	*Burning hands*
Nybor's mild admonishment	*Player's Guide to Faerûn*	*Hold person*
Viscid glob	*Underdark*	*Phantasmal killer*

Urlathan, tiny viper familiar: hp 24; *Monster Manual* 280.

Trizeen, male drow ranger 3/fighter 3/blackguard 4: CR 11; Medium humanoid; HD 3d8+3 plus 7d10+7; hp 65; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 22, touch 14, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +10; Grapple +12; Atk +14 melee (1d8+4/17–20, *+1 longsword*) or +13 ranged (1d8+2/×3, masterwork composite longbow); Full Atk +12/+7 melee (1d8+3/17–20, *+1 longsword*) and +12 melee (1d6+1/19–20, masterwork short sword) or +13/+8 ranged (1d8+2/×3, masterwork composite longbow); SA rebuke undead 6/day, poison use, smite good 1/day, sneak attack +1d6, spells; SQ aura of despair, dark blessing, darkvision 120 feet, detect good, drow traits, favored enemy humans +2, spell resistance 21, wild empathy +6; AL CE; SV Fort +15, Ref +11, Will +8; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 16.

Skills: Climb +4, Concentration +5, Diplomacy +9, Hide +7, Intimidate +10, Jump +7, Knowledge (religion) +3, Listen +9, Move Silently +7, Search +9, Spot +9, Swim +3.

Feats: Cleave, Endurance[B], Improved Critical (longsword), Improved Sunder, Power Attack[B], Track[B], Two-Weapon Fighting[B], Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Focus (short sword)[B].

Languages: Common, Draconic, Elven, Undercommon.

Blackguard Spells Prepared (caster level 4): 1st—*doom* (DC 12), *magic weapon*; 2nd—*eagle's splendor*.

Possessions: *+2 mithral breastplate, +1 longsword*, masterwork short sword, masterwork composite longbow (+2 Strength) with 20 arrows, *amulet of natural armor +1, ring of protection +2, cloak of resistance +1, gloves of Dexterity +2, wand of cure moderate wounds* (4 charges), one dose of purple worm poison, trunk key, 15 gp.

Tactics: Quamara and Trizeen are both resourceful combatants. They share a strong sense of self-preservation, but they're not cowards. They always seek to hurt the enemy as much as possible, but can recognize looming defeat and flee if they can. If cornered, they fight to the death. If they're together and they have time to prepare for a fight, Quamara casts *blindsight* on herself, and then *displacement* on herself and on Trizeen. During these three rounds, Trizeen treats the blade of his longsword with purple worm poison, then casts *magic weapon* on his short sword and finally casts *eagle's splendor* on himself.

In combat, Trizeen tries to stay close to Quamara, but picks out a fighting character for his fist attack. He hopes to sap that character's Strength score with his poisoned blade. Meanwhile, Quamara casts *haste* on herself, Trizeen, and as many allies as she can manage. After that, Trizeen presses his melee attacks, always looking for chances to flank his opponents so he can use his sneak attack ability. If damaged, he might try to use his *cure moderate wounds* wand on himself or on Quamara, as the need arises.

After casting *haste*, Quamara looks for chances to use her breath weapon on as many foes as she can. She tries to avoid hitting Trizeen, but isn't so careful about other allies. She might use *fly* to improve her position. She uses *viscid glob* against foes giving Trizeen a hard time and *Nybor's mild admonishment* or *battering ram* against foes that menace her. If she senses the battle going against her, she grabs Trizeen and uses *dimension door* to escape into the surrounding forest (the estate's *mythal* suppresses teleportation effects, but Quamara's mythal key allows her to use teleportation spells).

Treasure: The furnishings in here are as rich as they look. The brazier is essentially an oversized everburning torch, but is indeed made of gold. It's worth 3,500 gp and weighs 120 pounds. The carpet on the floor weighs 350 pounds and is worth 1,000 gp. There are eleven tapestries on the walls, each worth 300 gp and weighing 40 pounds.

Development: If they notice a fight in area **2**, or if they're alerted to danger somewhere else on the estate, Quamara and Trizeen prepare as noted in the tactics section and then go join the fight. They take the draegloths from area **2** with them when they go and order the draegloths from area **3** to wake up and guard area **2**.

7. Bedchambers

This room is opulently outfitted with thick carpets, tapestries of strangely compelling patterns and shapes, and fine furnishings, including a large bed, a desk, and a chest of drawers. A large trunk sits under the bed, and bookshelves (as yet still empty) have been built into the south wall.

These two rooms once served as magical laboratories. Now, they're bedchambers for Quamara and Trizeen. The doors leading to area **6** are bolted from this side whenever they are within.

The secret door to area **8** is one-way, and only opens from the south.

Treasure: The furnishings in these rooms are high quality, but not particularly valuable. The trunks, however, hold loot stolen from the catacombs and from Quamara's and Trizeen's recent ventures. The trunks are locked, and the owners have the keys.

Trizeen's trunk contains a suit of *+1 full plate armor*, 1,250 gp, and two bolts of fine silk cloth worth 30 gp each.

Quamara's trunk holds 2,156 gp, 1,930 sp, and 19 pieces of ancient elven jewelry worth a total 2,325 gp.

Trunks: 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 15; Break DC 23, Open Lock DC 25.

8. Storage Rooms

These areas hold piles of empty crates and barrels. The door leading from area **8a** to area **2** is bolted on the area **2** side. Area **8b**'s door has a bolt on the inside, but it's unbolted.

9. Grotto

A stunning geological garden covers every surface of this cavern. Flowery blooms of multicolored stone blanket the walls and floor. Rainbow-colored stalactites hang from the ceiling. Among the stony flowers, hundreds of softly glowing mushrooms, some as big as halflings, loom spectrally.

The lithic wonders of this cavern are formations from the natural stone of the cliff and trace minerals in the rock. The secret door between this area and area **8** is one-way, and only opens from the east..

10. Guardpost (EL 13)

The walls of this cavern glow softly in places where phospherescent fungi cling to ledges and cracks. Stalactites hang from the ceiling in thick patches, but the stalagimites below have been chiseled away to make the floor somewhat level.

This area once marked a natural cave opening in the cliff outside. The Keleidsas blocked the opening with a secret door. The door is locked, but the key hangs on a nearby peg.

Creatures: Two draegloth barbarians and a half-dragon troll warrior are always on watch here. See area **2** for draegloth statistics and see area **C** on the estate map for troll statistics.

Draegloth barbarian 5 (2): hp 103; see page 74.

Half-green dragon troll warrior 2: hp 112; see page 70.

Tactics: The draegloths use tactics similar to those described in area **2**. They usually stand just inside the alcove leading to the secret door and block it off. If someone opens the secret door, one draegloth casts *darkness* before they both attack anything that tries to come through the door.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure is not truly over until the PCs defeat Quamara and Trizeen or at least drive them from the estate. Both of the villains are smart enough to pack up and move on if they know that adventurers powerful enough to defeat them have discovered their lair.

If Quamara or Trizeen survive the adventure, it's a good bet that they'll remain in the Dales and attempt to recruit new followers. They could menace Archendale for years to come. If Quamara or Trizeen are slain, its possible that the pair's contacts in Sembia or House Jaelare come looking for them. Jezz the Lame of House Jaelare (see page 126 of the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*) becomes very interested in any group that could defeat Quamara.

Skip Williams hails from the D&D game's birthplace: Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. After 20 years or so working full-time in the game industry as a writer, game designer, editor, convention organizer, and magazine columnist, Skip is back in rural Wisconsin, where he keeps busy with a garden and orchard and occasionally concocts dastardly plots like the one in this adventure.

Scaling the Adventure

While "Secrets of the Arch Wood" is designed for four characters of 13th level, it can be modified for higher-level characters by increasing the character levels of the NPC villains encountered by a number equal to the difference between the average party level and 13. Don't forget to adjust the treasure found in this adventure appropriately. Increase the greater shadows by 4 Hit Dice, and enhance the advanced sword spiders with the fiendish template. Finally, consider putting a more dangerous spirtual guardian in area **5**, a remnant of the ancient Keleidsas—perhaps a bound ghaele eladrin.

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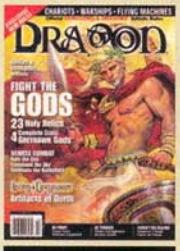

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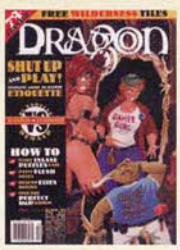

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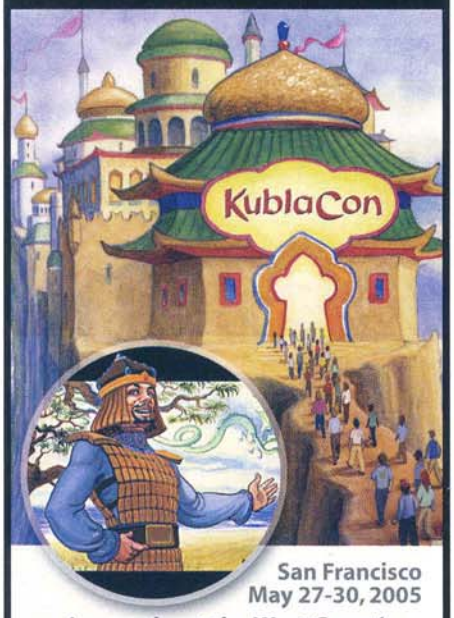

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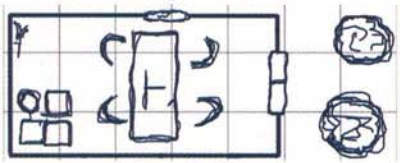

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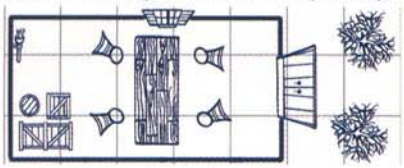

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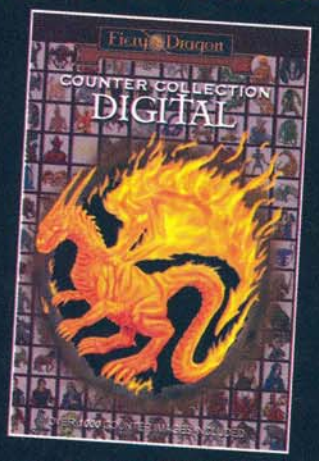

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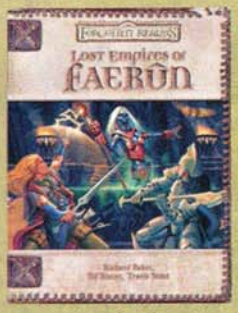

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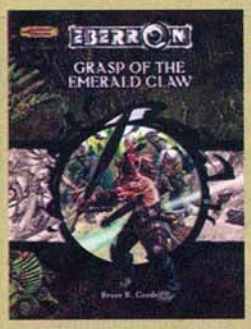
Grab your pack and leap into an action-packed, intrigue-laced world of cinematic adventure. Within the Eberron Campaign Setting, you'll discover a vast, richly detailed world infused with magic and waiting to be filled with daring escapades and dangerous exploits. Throw open the cover—and be ready for anything.

The Eberron Campaign Setting includes: 4 new races (changeling, kalashtar, shifter, and warforged), over 70 new feats, 8 new prestige classes, a new character class (the artificer), as well as new equipment, weapons, spells, magic items, monsters, and monster templates. Highly detailed regions and new organizations make running a campaign entertaining and easy. The Eberron Campaign Setting even includes a short adventure so you can launch your campaign right away.



Grasp of the Emerald Claw

Game System: Dungeons & Dragons

This full-length adventure for the newest D&D campaign setting showcases many of the most unique traits of the Eberron setting. It plays out across the Eberron world and is designed to either be a stand-alone adventure or an immediate follow-up to the first and second published Eberron adventures, *Shadows of the Last War* and *Whispers of the Vampire's Blade*.

Star Wars Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook

Game System: Star Wars RPG

Revised and updated with new information from Star Wars: Attack of the Clones, including game statistics, characters, creatures, and vehicles, this book contains all the rules needed to play the popular Star Wars Roleplaying Game. It spans all Star Wars eras, including The Rise of the Empire era, The Rebellion era, and The New Jedi Order era, with material that has never been compiled into a single source.

Added features of the revised rulebook include rules for playing droid characters, a new starship combat system, and expanded creature design rules. New species, skills, feats, character classes, prestige classes, and equipment will be extremely well received by the players and fans who have asked for them.

The revised rulebook, which features all-new cover art and interior design, is 100% compatible with previous Star Wars Roleplaying Game products.

d20 Past

Game System: d20

This new rules supplement provides everything players and gamemasters need to participate in adventures in the time period between the Renaissance and World War II, including new character options and rules for early modern firearms. It begins with an exploration of the historical period between 1450 and 1950, and then provides rules for creating characters and campaigns that blend realism and fantasy. *d20 Past* also presents alternative campaign models, along with all the rules needed to play swashbuckling pirate adventures, Victorian horror investigations, thrilling Pulp Era escapades, and more—including three ready-to-play campaign modules.

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EDEN STUDIOS INC

Eden Studios creates some of the most creative RPGs in the business. If you loved watching Buffy: The Vampire Slayer on TV, then check out their line of Buffy and Angel RPG products, including limited edition leather cover versions of many books. For a more traditional horror approach, you have All Flesh Must Be Eaten and Witchcraft. Finally, if you like card games, Eden has two good ones with Abduction and Hack! a card game based on the Knights of the Dinner Table brand.

Fields of Blood: The Book of War

Game System: d20

Fields of Blood: The Book of War provides everything you need to rule a nation, raise an army, and assault your enemies on the battlefield using the d20 rules. From realms to units to battle magic, your character can now be a hero both in the dungeon and on the battlefield.

Fields of Blood: The Book of War establishes a campaign structure, encompassing all your settings and adventures. Inside you will find: A complete set of detailed wargame rules based on the d20 system mechanic; rules for leading troops, from a unit of one hundred to an army of thousands, as well as rules for governing a vast nation. Players will also find new prestige classes for every character type, designed for use in mass combat.

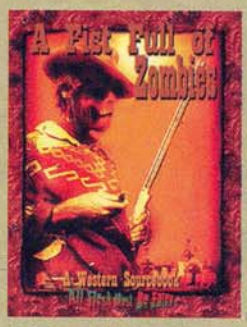
Fields of Blood: The Book of War is the ultimate addition for characters and GMs alike. Your campaign will never be the same!

Deluxe Angel Roleplaying Game

Game System: Universe

Adventure inside the Angelverse with this complete roleplaying game that streamlines the Unisystem for cinematic action and adventure. This beautiful book contains everything you need to start your campaign—including a guide to character creation, pre-constructed Heroes and White Hats, as well as the entire Angel Investigations Cast, for your quick-play pleasure.

This prestige hardbound book has a black leatherette cover, foil design logo and a cloth bookmark. Quantities are extremely limited (1000 copies), so grab one while you can!



Zombie Smackdown

Game System: All Flesh Must Be Eaten (Unisystem)

Step into the squared circle for the ultimate showdown! *Zombie Smackdown* is a supplement for the All Flesh Must Be Eaten RPG. In it, you will find: Expanded rules for high-flying, bone-crunching wrestling action, including how to use Heat to pull off dramatic turn of events, Zombie Cast Member creation for wrestling mayhem, new Character Types and zombie aspects to drop kick any face or heel, backgrounds on four different styles of wrestling, weapons you can—but aren't supposed to—use in the ring, and details on combining different wrestling styles.

All Flesh Must Be Eaten

Game System: All Flesh Must Be Eaten (Unisystem)

Welcome to the World of Survival Horror!

All Flesh Must Be Eaten is a complete roleplaying game. In it, you will find: eleven different Deadworld settings allowing customization of the storyline; a comprehensive zombie creation system to surprise and alarm players; a list of equipment crucial to surviving a world of shambling horrors; detailed character creation rule for Norms, Survivors and the Inspired; a full exposition of the Unisystem rule mechanics, suitable for any game in any time period; Open Game License conversion text for porting AFMBE to your favorite modern campaign.

WitchCraft

WitchCraft is a roleplaying game of modern magic and dark secrets. Player characters are the Gifted. Feared for their unique powers, they have been hounded for centuries, and forced to practice their Arts in secret. A Time of Reckoning draws near. It marks the end of an era and the beginning of a new one, or the destruction of all things. The choices the Gifted make will determine what our future will be like.

WitchCraft is a complete roleplaying game, with rules to create Gifted and Mundane characters, an overview of a modern world beset by supernatural danger, and the Unisystem, a set of game mechanics that can use dice, cards or be completely story-driven to fit the needs and desires of your gaming group.

Abduction

You've been abducted by aliens! Be the first to escape, and don't let the others get in the way. Abduction is a non-collectible card game designed for 2-4 players to complete in about 20 minutes. The complete game comes in one box with 72 cards and game rules. One six-sided die is required to play. You can even combine two sets to play with up to eight players!

Hack! Card Game: Tomb of Vectra

Hack! is a non-collectible card game based off of everyone's favorite Knights of the Dinner Table characters. Each player purchases a deck based off of their favorite KoDT characters in their HackMaster personas, and then races with the other players to be the first to gain the treasure. The First Edition of Hack! throws players into the Labyrinth of Vectra. Who'll be the first to chop off his hand and replace it with the deadly Hand of Vectra? Knuckles, El Ravager, Thorina, Teflon Billy, and even the GM could be at your command in this fast-paced card game.

Buffy the Vampire Slayer RPG

Game System: Buffy the Vampire Slayer (Unisystem)

The Buffy the Vampire Slayer RPG is a complete roleplaying game that utilizes the Buffy Unisystem, a streamlined version of the Unisystem rules perfect for cinematic slayage and sneakage. Roleplay in the Buffyverse and strike fear into the hearts of baddies everywhere.

This product includes a guide to character creation, including pre-constructed Slayers and Scoobies for your quick-play pleasure, as well as the abilities of all your favorite Buffy characters.

Slayer's Handbook (Limited Edition)

Game System: Buffy the Vampire Slayer RPG (Unisystem)

The Slayer's Handbook is a supplement for the Buffy the Vampire Slayer roleplaying game. In it, you will find: Background on being a Slayer, tales of the Slayers and advice for Directors on using Slayers in their games; new character creation ideas, qualities and drawbacks, more character archetypes; guidelines for alternative settings in a Slayer-oriented game, including different places, times and histories; three ready-to-play mini-settings for Slayers of all shapes and sizes; a complete Episode continuing the plotline begun in the BTVS corebook

This prestige hardbound book has a light blue-colored leatherette cover, foil design logo and a cloth bookmark. Quantities are extremely limited (1000 copies), so grab one while you can!

Monster Smackdown (Limited Edition)

Game System: Buffy the Vampire Slayer (Unisystem)

The Monster Smackdown is a supplement for the Buffy the Vampire Slayer roleplaying game. In it, you will find: An overview covering the nature of vampires, demons, hell dimensions and other supernatural ickies; descriptions and quick-sheet stats for vampires, their powers, vulnerabilities, and hangouts; similar treatment for demons, a list of demon powers, and a rundown on demonic races; details on other undead, primals and various critters; background and specifics on Buffy's major villains, unique demons, hellgoddesses, and human villains; rules, guidelines and ideas for creating monsters true to the spirit of the Buffyverse; a complete Episode featuring a monster in serious need of a smackdown

This prestige hardbound book has a black-colored leatherette cover, foil design logo and a cloth bookmark. Quantities are extremely limited (1000 copies), so grab one while you can!

CHECK OUT OUR PRICES AT PAIZO.COM

Bastion Press, formed by former TSR and Wizards employee Jim Butler, creates a great range of d20 products that you can use with any campaign setting. Whether you are looking for more details about creatures of the night, airships, or ocean adventuring, Bastion has a book that will help you make the experience great. If you are on the prowl for a greatly detailed campaign setting to call your own, take a look at Bastion's Oathbound setting.

Oathbound: Domains of the Forge

Game System: d20

Prepare to immerse yourself in a new world, one that has existed since before the consciousness of most cultures, yet still holds mysteries that baffle mortal minds. Pulled from worlds across the cosmos, the Domains of the Forge serve as a strange mixing ground of cultures, races, and ideologies. Those who visit the world come away forever changed, their hearts, souls, and bodies marked by their experiences while within the world of the Oathbound.

Oathbound: Domains of the Forge is a capstone setting designed for use with any d20 campaign world (or even as a world unto itself). Heroes are pulled into the world from their homelands for either a brief stay, extended visit, or a lifetime of opportunity. The choice is yours.

Oathbound: The Planes of Penance

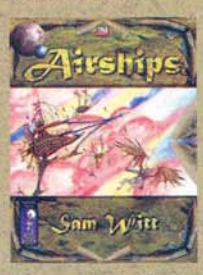
Game System: d20

Beyond the most populous city on the Forge lies a vast, uncontrolled expanse of rolling grasslands, scattered crags, and light woods. Powerful forces vie for control over this abundant domain, as ruthless bloodlords of the cities clash against the deep-rooted druids of the wilds, hardened armies from the west, and even mysterious visitors from the depths of the northern oceans. In this highly detailed addition to the Oathbound capstone setting, gamemasters can add another layer of depth to their campaigns.

Pale Designs: A Poisoner's Handbook

Game System: d20

This book is the ultimate guide to poisons and their use in the d20 system. *Pale Designs: A Poisoner's Handbook* presents: An array of new poisons for use by both players and Game Masters; new rules for handling poisons in a campaign; additional options to allow heroes safer access to poisons; new prestige classes, equipment, and magic items for assassins and others interested in poison use.



Airships

Game System: d20

Airships provides all the rules necessary to bring flying ships into any campaign setting. Construction rules, combat, aerial and 3D movement, and other essential information is all covered. Also included are deck plans and specifications for a number of ships. Airships will bring new heroes to the fore when a village under siege cries, "Look! Up in the sky!"

Out for Blood

Game System: d20

If ever there were a creature that truly inspired the human imagination, it would be the vampire. Their existence has permeated itself in our favorite game. *Out for Blood* details 18 brand new prestige classes that benefit players, gamemasters, and vampires. 18 new monsters—ranging from new forms of vampires to those that oppose them—also await discovery. Organizations that serve and shun vampires are also detailed, along with new spells that are sure to add some necromantic flavor to any campaign.

Oathbound: Mysteries of Arena

Game System: d20

The war-ravaged dunes of Arena conceal some of the greatest mysteries on the Forge. *Mysteries of Arena* is the follow-up product to *Oathbound: Arena*, and it expands upon the Forge's largest domain. Contained within this product are: 5 new player character races, and a cadre of new spells; new classes and prestige classes; new feats, skills, and additional rules for mass combat; new equipment, weapons, and armor native to the desert; new magic items, artifacts, and relics; 12 mysteries of Arena, detailed and ready to explore; a 30-page adventure delving into one of the darkest secrets of Arena's past.

Doom Striders

Game System: d20

Doom Striders presents a new type of weapon designed for more heroic play styles and face-to-face encounters. Whether you're looking for a weapon to throw at your opponents in the next mass combat encounter, or an effective offense against a dragon guarding its horde, you'll find something within the pages of *Doom Striders*.

Into the Blue

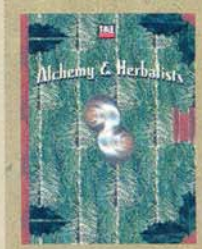
Game System: d20

For the GM, *Into the Blue* allows the waters of a world to churn with as much life as the mountains of the dwarves or the forests of the elves. Take your adventures to the next level among the kelp jungles and deepwater trenches of the oceans.

Arms & Armor v3.5

Game System: d20

Arms & Armor v3.5 is more then just an update to our original release. This book contains all the weapons and armor you'll need for your campaign, each carefully updated to v3.5 and balanced for easy use in any campaign. New artwork, monsters, weapons, and armor are waiting to rock your world.



Alchemy and Herbalists

Game System: d20

Looking for more wondrous ways to create fantastic new substances, turn lead into gold, or create powerful new magical items? A&H provides 5 new prestige classes, 2 new schools (one for both alchemy and herbalism), a 14-page herbal catalog, 15 new feats and information on how current feats and skills augment the alchemy and herbalism creation processes, and the Catalog of Wonders that details more than 150 new items that can be created with the Alchemy and Profession (Herbalist) skills. Three new monsters (alchemunculus, erlmantle, and the kin-o-the-green template) also await you.

Guildcraft

Game System: d20

Until now, there has been little reason for adventurers to give guilds a second thought. While often seen as places to find goods and services or hirelings, guilds can form the backdrop for many exciting adventures on many fantasy worlds where power and prominence in shaping nations, cities, and cultures depends on the guilds and money.

Guildcraft details the powers and privileges of guild membership, as well as new knowledge and details on the underpinnings of your d20 worlds. Adventurers of every class and skill have new opportunities for both enlightenment and profit.

Faeries

Game System: d20

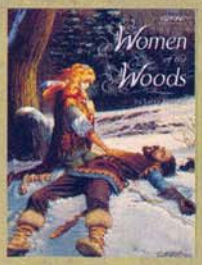
Welcome to the Twilit Lands, where all is fey and faeries rule. This d20 guide to Faeries provides answers on the fair folk, the fey races and creatures more ancient than dragons and far more enigmatic than their sizes or shapes ever reveal. This supplement provides new rules and a new understanding of fey monsters, as well as many new faeries for your d20 games. Best of all, the world of Faerie, a world as close as a dream and as magical as its denizens, comes alive with its legends and lore for the Game Masters and can easily be linked to all d20 worlds.

CHECK OUT OUR PRICES AT PAIZO.COM

SOVEREIGN PRESS

Sovereign Press makes two great d20 game settings. Founded by Dragonlance co-author Margaret Weis, it only makes sense that Sovereign produces the Dragonlance campaign setting under license from Wizards of the Coast. Everything you need to run a Krynn game can be found on our site.

If your tastes go towards a more traditional game, check out their Sovereign Stone line of game products, based on the worlds of Larry Elmore. Speaking of the great artist, paizo.com also has a number of SnarfQuest products, and a few Larry Elmore art products available, as well.



Women of the Woods

There are many interesting women in the realm of fantasy art, but no one can make them as vivid and intriguing as fantasy artist Larry Elmore. Travel with Larry as he introduces you to ten of the most interesting magic-users, spirits, and witches you have ever encountered.

This 9" x 12", 48-page hardbound book is packed with drawings from the master of fantasy art and includes an encounter to set the mood with the art. Also included in this high quality publication are d20 statistics, so any Dungeon Master can drop one of these interesting characters into any campaign.

Elmore Character Clip Art & Color Customizing Studio

For years many people have enjoyed coloring Larry Elmore's artwork. Gamers often dream of having Elmore draw their favorite fantasy character; small game companies wished that they could afford Elmore artwork for their next game supplement. With this new product, Elmore Productions, Inc. is about to make all those people very happy. The *Elmore Character Clip Art and Color Customizing Studio* offers both d20 OGL and Clip Art for all to use—as long as they give Larry Elmore proper credit on their web site, in their game product, or if they decide to just use it for their own personal use.

This product comes in a Slip Cover box with containing a 96-page perfect bound book that includes 200+ original black & white line art drawings and 1 CD-ROM.

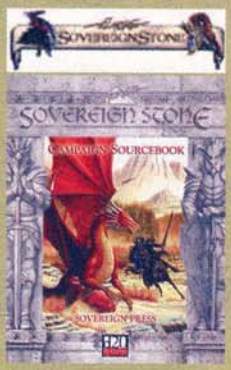
The SnarfQuest RPG Worldbook

Game System: d20

Looking to add some humor to your current 'd20' campaign? Or need to get reacquainted with the misadventures of your favorite Zeetva? This 128-page book is packed full of 'd20' material—including a brand-new character class, prestige classes, feats, skills, spells, races, monsters, magical items, DM advice, and comical adventure hooks for the industry's most endearing comic book character.

SnarfQuest Card Game

Travel with Snarf and create your own misadventures on the way to obtaining wealth, treasure, and all that good stuff. All players assume the role of Snarf during their turns, each trying to create their personalized story line for Snarf. Each player will meet Allies, discover treasure, endure events and hopefully avoid monsters along the way. The game comes with a 100-card deck and one Snarf miniature that will allow 2 to 6 players to have hours of wacky fun.



Sovereign Stone Campaign Sourcebook

Game System: d20

Enter the world developed by award-winning fantasy artist Larry Elmore and made famous by Margaret Weis & Tracy Hickman in the best-selling Sovereign Stone novel trilogy from HarperCollins Publishers.

Sovereign Stone is a complete campaign setting for the fabulous d20 system. Included are new races, new classes, new feats, new skills, and new monsters—created by some of the best known names in the RPG industry. Learn to cast magic in a new way in the Sovereign Stone world. A new d20 magic system lets you build points toward the casting of spells, making complex spells more difficult to cast, while simple spells are easy and quick. The world has Orks, Elves, Humans and Dwarves as player races, and powerful Dominion Lords who fight for good against the evil undead knights of the Void.

Codex Mysterium

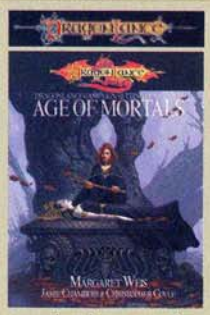
Game System: d20

A sourcebook for magic in the d20 System Sovereign Stone campaign setting. More than 200 new spells, magic items, prestige classes, and admittance into mysterious magical orders such as the elven Wyred, the Temple of the Magi, and the Dunkargan mage guilds!

Bestiary of Loerem

Game System: d20

From the terrible, flesh-eating equus that bedevil the dwarves on the plains of Grak to the mystical renead who act as messengers for the elven Ancestors, Loerem is a world filled with strange and dangerous creatures just waiting to be discovered. A vast continent filled with unexplored regions, Loerem is home to far more than a handful of races struggling for dominance. It is a land filled with life, from beautiful and mysterious to twisted mockeries of magicks most foul. The *Bestiary of Loerem* bring 95 new creatures to the gaming table. With new templates, new spells, new magic items, and even new creature subtypes that are distinctly part of the Sovereign Stone campaign setting, the information within can also be used to add even more depth and excitement to almost any d20 campaign!



Age of Mortals: Dragonlance Campaign Setting Companion

Game System: d20

The Fifth Age of Krynn—known as the Age of Mortals—has been a turbulent time for the world of Krynn. The gods who watched the world were absent for decades, mighty dragon overlords warred and conquered vast territories, and old magic had to be learned to replace the new. An epic War of Souls had to be fought to restore some of what was lost—ushering in a new and exciting era, full of possibilities for both good and evil. *The Age of Mortals* campaign book is designed as a companion volume to the Dragonlance Campaign Setting published by Wizards of the Coast. Designed and written by the same design team (under the guidance of author Margaret Weis), this volume gives players everything they need to play in any Fifth Age campaign—including during and after the War of Souls itself. *Age of Mortals* contains an update on the races of Ansalon, many new prestige classes, feats, equipment, magical items, and spells. It details many important potential adventuring locations in great detail, as well as mighty dragons and many important characters of the era.

War of the Lance: Dragonlance Campaign Setting Companion

Game System: d20

The *War of the Lance Campaign Book* is designed as a companion volume to the Dragonlance Campaign Setting published by Wizards of the Coast. It is the first Dragonlance game product by Tracy Hickman and Margaret Weis since the Dragonlance Adventures in the 1980's! This volume gives players everything they need to play during the War of the Lance. All of the principal characters of this period are detailed, including the Heroes of the Lance and the terrifying dragon highlords. The major locations and creatures of the saga are revealed as well, with details on how to "play out" the war and how to run a campaign that puts new heroes in the center stage! War of the Lance contains an update on the races of Ansalon, many new prestige classes, feats, equipment, magical items, and spells. The sourcebook details many important potential adventuring locations in great detail, and gives out great information useful for both players and Dungeon Masters.

Dragonlance Dungeon Master's Screen

Game System: d20

The Dragonlance Campaign Sourcebook introduced unique elements to the Dungeons & Dragons game, such as the effects of the waxing and waning moons of magic upon Krynn's wizards. All of that information is presented here, as well as information on the Dungeons & Dragons 3rd Edition Revised rules published in July 2003. In addition to the screen boasting a brand-new cover painting by Larry Elmore, it comes bundled with a 32-page saddle-stitched booklet containing "plug & play" stock NPCs appropriate for any Dragonlance campaign.

CHECK OUT OUR PRICES AT PAIZO.COM

Reaper Miniatures makes the most comprehensive line of roleplaying miniatures around, with close to 1,000 miniatures from which to choose. In addition, their newly released Warlord miniatures game brings fantasy miniatures battle to the tabletop. Without a doubt, we have what you need to bring extra excitement to your tabletop—including the full line of Reaper paint and modeling products. So, take a look at a sample of products we have available on our site, and remember that we have over a thousand more to choose from on paizo.com, all ready for next day shipment.

DARK HEAVEN LEGENDS

Kallista Female Warrior w/Axe

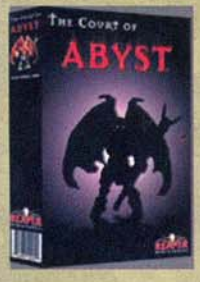
Flesh Golem

Telmoraine Elven Warrior

Reaper Learn to Paint Kit-1

Reaper's Learn to Paint Kit includes everything you need to get started painting miniatures. The contents of this kit are: 2 Fantasy/Dark Heaven Legends fantasy figures (One Anhurian Swordsman and one Barrow Rat); two Brushes; complete, fully illustrated color paint guide. In addition, the set contains the following Pro-Paints: 18002 Firehawk, 18010 Emerald, 18014 Dragon Blue, 18023 Walnut, 18024 Woodland Brown, 18029 Caucasian, 18041 Dragon White, 18042 Dragon Black, and 18102 Truesilver.

8001 Blood Red	8009 Kilt Green	8012 Breonne Navy Blue	8016 Imperial Purple	8024 Woodland Brown



The Court of Abyst

In the sulfurous pits of the underworld, the demon prince, Abyst, commands dark legions to do his bidding. From his fiery throne, he and his demonic servants wait for the chance to conquer the Abyss... and beyond.

The Pirates of the Dragonspine Sea

Six of the saltiest dogs that ever sailed the Dragonspine Sea!

This 144-page, full-color hardcover rulebook for Reaper Miniatures' new game, *Warlord*, features the complete game rules, a 10-page painting guide, army rosters for nine factions plus mercenary forces, rules for campaign play, a complete fantasy setting for wargaming or roleplaying in the land of Taltos, and player sheets and play aids for game and campaign use.

The book includes a complete painting tutorial and color guide by award-winning painter Anne Foerster. This game can be functional as a one-shot game, or used in massive ongoing wars with realistic reinforcement, supply, and casualty rules, lending it a versatility rarely found in tabletop wargames on the skirmish and tactical level. Based on Reaper's Adventure Game Engine (R.A.G.E.), this new game features a fast, innovative turn sequence, unit data cards for fast reference, and Reaper's original Damage Track System for realistic game play. All units are fully customizable. With options from spells, equipment, weapons, armor, and training upgrades, no two forces will ever be the same!

Elandaria the Sorceress

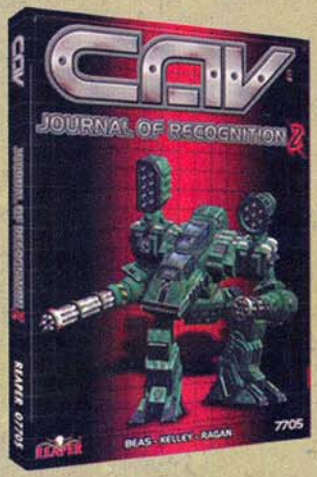
Gundor Hoardtaker Barbarian

Ashkrypt the Lich

EXALTED

Exalted Jiunan Hunter of the Dead

Exalted Village Shaman



CAV: Journal of Recognition 2

It's the same old story. You wait nervously in the pre-dawn chill. Quietly at first, you hear the enemy advance: the distant thunder of their progress crescendos into a bone-rattling roar. Then comes the decisive moment. As the opposing CAVs, aircraft, and armor crest the nearest ridge, you shout the command to fire. Suddenly, your ECM indicators shriek. Your best foot forward stumbles as the enemy swarms toward you. You thought you knew how to fight anything—but you've never seen anything like these before! Through the thunderclap of incoming fire, your old Sarge's words echo in your head: First rule of war soldier—evolve, or die!

CHECK OUT OUR PRICES AT PAIZO.COM

Sabertooth Games

Sabertooth games, a subsidiary of Games Workshop, makes a great line of Lord of the Rings collectible miniatures products, all of which we have in stock for next day delivery. Sabertooth also makes two lines of trading card games based on Games Workshop's Warhammer product lines. We carry individual boosters, starters, and displays of most of the WarCry and Horus Heresy lines.

Legions of Chaos: WarCry Expansion
Booster Display: 40 Boosters
Booster Pack: 9 Cards

Archaon's forces are marching on the Empire. Take up your army and help the Grand Alliance and Valten, or fight with Hordes of Darkness and the forces of Archaon. Legions of Chaos is a Storm of Chaos release: Many faces from the huge summer campaign are featured in this 120-card WarCry expansion.

Siege of Middenheim: Warcry Expansion
Booster Display: 40 Boosters
Booster Pack: 9 Cards

The conclusion to the Storm of Chaos campaign, Siege of Middenheim focuses on the lesser-known units and characters from this mighty struggle between Archaon and Valten. The sixth booster expansion for WarCry, Siege of Middenheim is a must-have for fans of the world of Warhammer fantasy!

WarCry Premium Deck Boxes

Carry around your WarCry decks and cards in style. Featuring artwork from both factions, these Deck Boxes are roomy enough to easily hold a sleeved deck, or up to 180+ cards. The WarCry Deck Boxes are also built sturdy and durable, easily putting up with the every day transportation you'll put them through. Each deck box contains 3 preview redemption cards from a future set, for their given faction. These special cards are sure to boost your deck's power!

Horus Heresy: The Warhammer 40,000 CCG Starter Decks
Starter Display: 10 Boosters
Starter Decks: 63 Cards

The Emperor of Mankind experiences the ultimate betrayal at the hands of Warmaster Horus, and all-out civil war ensues in *Horus Heresy: the Warhammer 40,000 CCG*. Loyalist Space Marines, faithful to the Emperor, prepare for a bloody battle against their Traitor brothers who fight for Horus. Which side will win this bloody war of brother against brother? Enter the Warhammer 40,000 universe with a starter deck from *Horus Heresy: The Warhammer 40,000 CCG*!

Each starter deck contains 63 partially set cards (42 set cards, 3 set sector cards, and 18 random cards, including 3 rares!) for either the Loyalist or the Traitor faction .These decks can be supplemented with booster packs for greater flexibility and more powerful decks.

Sedition's Gate: Horus Heresy Expansion
Booster Display: 40 Boosters
Booster Packs: 10 Cards

Deploy troops from booster packs of *Sedition's Gate*, the first expansion for the Horus Heresy: The Warhammer 40,000 CCG. Blood Angels, Emperor's Children and Word Bearers abound in the ultimate war for humanity!

Traitor's Gambit: Horus Heresy Expansion
Booster Display: 40 Boosters
Booster Packs: 10 Cards

Daemons abound in this third expansion for the Hours Heresy: the Warhammer 40,000 CCG. Fighting over new sectors these spawn of Chaos battle the Emperor's legions of Blood Angels, Space Wolves and other Space Marines in the battle for supremacy.

Lord of the Rings TMG Map Set 1
This Map Pack contains two 2-sided maps (17x17 40mm hex) for use with your The Lord of the Rings TMG figures. It's a whole new war with these extra maps for The Lord of the Rings TMG—new terrain, new locations, and new places for the heroes of Middle-Earth to defend against the oncoming evil forces of Saruman and Sauron.

Lord of the Rings: Tradeable Miniatures Game Base Set Booster Packs
Booster Packs: 4 Figures

This is the booster for the base set of The Lord of the Rings TMG. It contains 4 randomly inserted figures to supplement your collection and help you create a great army. Each booster is comprised of one rare, one uncommon, and two common figures. Occasionally the rare is replaced by an ultra-rare. Additionally each booster has a special Battle Die which has the Eye of Sauron as the '1.'

Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Ring Expansion
Booster Packs: 4 Figures

The first expansion for The Lord of the Rings Tradeable Miniatures Game, *The Fellowship of the Ring* contains 80 new exciting figures for you to supplement your armies with. Each booster pack contains four (2 common, 1 uncommon, 1 rare or ultra-rare) randomly-distributed miniatures. *The Fellowship of the Ring* expansion focuses on characters from the first movie of the trilogy. Collect such exciting figures as Galadriel, Isildur, Twilight Ringwraiths, and more. Five new special abilities add even more depth to strategy, and multiple SA's allow you to activate the same one multiple times a turn.

Cave Troll: The Lord of the Rings TMG Premium
The first in our Premium Line range, this *Cave Troll* adds an exciting new dimension to The Lord of the Rings TMG. You get a Cave Troll on a larger monster base to add to your evil army, as well as three good heroes to add to your good army. With all new abilities and the special Monster Base, he's a perfect addition to many armies, and to any collection. And with brand new versions of Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli—featuring new sculpts—to help lead your good armies, this pack is a must-have for any player.

Sauron: The Lord of the Rings TMG Premium Line
Sauron—the Dark Lord and creator of The Ring—has blighted the lands of Middle Earth with his fell armies and evil servants. He is the ultimate villain and warrior, able to sweep armies aside with his blows. Now you can bring him to the table in The Lord of the Rings Tradeable Miniatures Game with this *Sauron* figure. Towering over any opposing forces, he is a power to be reckoned with. Make his power yours with this second figure in our Premium Line.

Treebeard: The Lord of the Rings TMG Premium Line (Image 4603)
The most famous and lovable Ent can be on your tabletop this fall, carrying with him the small, but powerful, Merry and Pippin in his branches. *Treebeard* comes to life as the third in our Premium Line series of models—his lifelike sculpt and amazing abilities standing tall for all to see. With his new ability, Ent Carry, he can transport up to two models in his "branches," making him an excellent choice for the Forces of Good.

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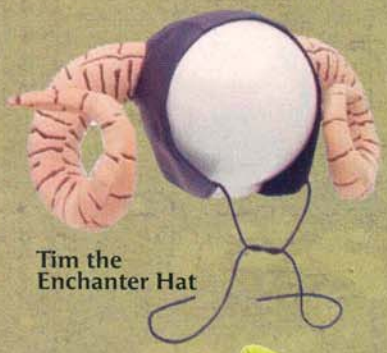

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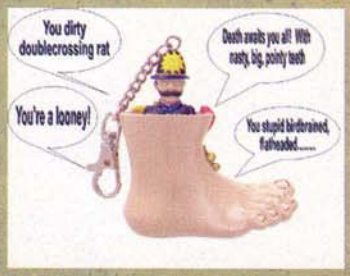
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PAIZO POTPOURRI

Here is a sampling of the variety of other items that you can find on paizo.com. We carry some items that you can only find at our site. Other items are so old that most other sites are sold out. And some are just plain cool. Take the time to browse our site for more items. You never know what you are going to find.

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This limited edition ticket was given out to Star Wars Fan Club members who attended a special dinner event in Seattle during 2004. The guests were Amy Allen (Aayla Secura) and Michonne Bourriague (Aurra Sing). Only 70 of these tickets were made. A few were left over after the event and these are being offered to you here on paizo.com.

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Star Wars: Episode II Attack of the Clones IMAX Poster

The poster, available in limited quantities, features a giant Yoda striding across North America, brandishing his lightsaber. Created by artist David McMacken for the theatrical release, these are the same striking, double-sided posters that were on display in IMAX theatres across the U.S. and Canada when Attack of the Clones opened November 1, 2002.

Hasbro Limited Edition Silver-Painted Boba Fett

This limited edition figure is modeled after the 300th Edition Boba Fett as he was seen in The Empire Strikes Back. It is packaged on a distinctive card; the same packaging is used for all figures worldwide. This 3 3/4" likeness of the saga's most infamous bounty hunter was created by Hasbro as a special thank you to Star Wars fans. The Official Fan Club sold this action figure at conventions in summer 2003.

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Featuring articles about the world behind Dungeons and Dragons by Erik Mona, Fred Weining, Sean Reynolds, and the Director of the Living Greyhawk Campaign, Stephen Radney-MacFarland.

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Vampire the Masquerade, Volume 2: Blood and Shadows

This 200-page collection of the best Vampire the Masquerade Comics features "Giovanni," plus the never before seen "Lasombra," "Assamite," and "Tremere."

Werewolf the Apocalypse, Volume Two: Fang and Claw

This collection features "Fianna," "Get of Fenris," plus the never before seen "Glass Walkers."

Born of the Night (Image

The album that started it all. A "must have" Halloween classic, this 48-minute journey into a haunted castle introduced the world to Midnight Syndicate's unique sound and style of Halloween CDs. A perfect blend of music, sound effects, and occasional narration.

Symphonies From the Crypt

This richly composed CD is the ultimate soundtrack for vampire fans, filled with haunting symphonies that capture the fear, fury, and passion of the vampire.

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Team Rocket is the 5th Pokemon Expansion Set. Team Rocket introduces many new "Dark" cards such as: Dark Charizard, Dark Raichu, Dark Gyarados, Here Comes Team Rocket, and many more fantastic cards.

Magic: The Gathering Mana Pin

This Magic: The Gathering pin features the 5 mana symbols. The pin was only available for a short time in the mid 90's. It can be used as a tie-tack or to decorate your convention badge. We only a few left in stock, so get yours today!

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If you're a fan of classic card games like Hearts and Spades, you'll go wild for *Go Wild!* Play sets of matching-color cards to win tricks and points. The first player to reach twenty points wins the game. Will you go all-out to win the first trick, or hold your best cards to score more points? Power shifts quickly in this topsy-turvy, wild-card strategy game.

Swerve

The Human Conspiracy has fabricated a pop-culture icon out of a UFO abducted dipsh*** earthman from the 80s to enter the infamous Grand Intergalactic Rally. Marvel as he, and his chaos-driven ship, the Mach Turtle, dodge peril by cycling between awake and asleep 60 times a second. Will his sponsor, the nefarious toy company I-Friend, succeed in Operation: Serpent in the Basket? Pay and find out, punter!

Twitch Card Game

It's a race to run out of cards. So when a card says it's your turn, play a card and play it FAST. Players flip the top card from their card piles over and into a bowl. The cards tell you who plays next. When you play out of turn or too slowly, other players challenge you. If they challenge correctly, you have to take all of the cards in the bowl! It's fun. It's frantic. It's fast. It's Twitch, the Quick-Reflex Card Game

THE BIG PICTURE

PLOTTING THE CAMPAIGN (PART 1)

BY MONTE COOK
BY KYLE HUNTER

So you've decided to start a new campaign. You've lined up all the necessary little details like, say, a good group of players and a place to play. You've figured out your house rules, your table rules and how you want things run. The practical details are out of the way. So what's next? Statting up the NPCs for the first adventure, right?

No.

If this is going to be a real campaign, as opposed to just one adventure, or a bunch of unrelated adventures strung together, you've got to have some kind of plan on where it is going and how you're going to get there. You've got to have a handle on the big picture.

What is the big picture? It's the thread, arc, or idea that turns a lot of fights and treasure looting sessions into a campaign. That's not to say that you need to create a campaign where every adventure is linked tightly together and revolves around a single core. Just about every campaign has side adventures and stand-alone scenarios sprinkled throughout, and many don't have truly linked adventures at all. Still, there's some thread that runs through a lot of what happens in the game to make it all into a cohesive whole. Maybe it's a recurring character (either enemy or ally), a central location (either to protect or penetrate), or just a theme.

This also doesn't mean you have to plot out every adventure before the campaign starts. In fact, this would be a poor idea, since you want things to remain flexible in the details. It does mean you want to give the future adventures some thought. Let's look at three extended (but still fairly simple) examples.

EXAMPLE 1: DUNGEON CAMPAIGN

You want to run a fairly straightforward D&D game, with the PCs exploring dungeons, fighting monsters and gaining treasure. A good place to start plotting out your campaign is the *Monster Manual*. Flipping through it, you decide that you like gnolls, ogre mages and mind flayers. You also enjoy creating non-monstrous, human foes for your PCs as well. You write something like this in your campaign workbook:

Gnolls
|
Humans
|
Ogre Mages
|
Mind Flayers

Now, these aren't going to be the only foes the PCs face, obviously, but you decide you want the crux of the campaign to flow around that progression you've created.

Gnolls, being CR 1, are tough monsters to fight at 1st level in groups. So you decide to actually start the campaign with rumors of gnoll troubles in settlements to the west, which hopefully will pique the players' interest. Before they can get there, however, some run-ins with bandits (1st-level warriors), goblins, and a brief detour into an abandoned mine filled with dire rats actually get the campaign started.

Eventually, though, the PCs run afoul of the gnolls. Knowing that you've got your campaign progression planned as stated above, you let the PCs find out—perhaps right away, perhaps once they get to the region where the gnolls are causing trouble—that the gnolls are rumored to have some hidden agenda in their raids. It turns out (the PCs ultimately learn, probably after clearing out the caves the gnolls use as a lair), that the gnolls were being paid by an evil human ranger to look for and abduct a young child with a peculiar birthmark. The ranger belongs to an organization from far to the east.

Clues (and the missing child) send the PCs in that direction, and (after numerous side adventures) eventually they deal with the organization, a cult that believes that a child with a certain birthmark will grow to become a sorcerer more powerful than any before him. The PCs rescue the child, but during the adventure they run afoul of a pair of ogre mage cultists who cause them grievous harm, humiliate them, and then teleport away using a magic item.

Only after the PCs get a bit more powerful can they track down the ogre mages (perhaps necessitating you to drop reminders and clues to keep the PCs interested). When they do, they learn that these ogre mages serve a foul and hideous master—a powerful mind flayer sorcerer with a birthmark similar to the young boy's. By this point, the PCs are 10th or 11th level, and when they've defeated the mind flayer, that will be the climax to the campaign as you see it.

The key to this plan is the simple progression you drew out at the very beginning. The advantage you have, knowing how one adventure will flow into another, is that you can drop in links and even foreshadowing very early. Perhaps in the gnoll camp the PCs find an amulet with an ogre mage, or even mind flayer symbol on it. If the PCs question a prisoner at the cult, he might have heard the ogre mages talking about their "master" once.

There are pitfalls to this plan, of course. Maybe the PCs won't want to travel to where the cult is. Maybe the ogre mages won't get away. You've got to foresee these pitfalls without creating a situation where the PCs are "railroaded" into the adventures you want to go on. This may mean that you provide links and hooks to the next step in the campaign that the PCs avoid, so you then have to create new links and hooks. In this way, you can gently herd them along to where you want them to go—hopefully without them knowing you're doing it—rather than leading them by the nose.

This example is purposely simplistic for space reasons. It assumes lots of unrelated adventures in between the progression adventures (which is a fine way to go). You might want to actually have more points on your general campaign progression, or you might want to have more twists and turns in it—perhaps the ogre mages don't live in the mind flayer's lair, but instead the final encounter with them leads the PCs to another stronghold of the cult, which then leads to the mind flayer. You definitely want to provide a lot more details in your notes right from the beginning, like symbols the cult uses, important NPC names (including the mind flayer's name), and so on. You can even go ahead and create the mind flayer's underground stronghold ahead of time, knowing that the PCs will end up there eventually.

EXAMPLE #2: POLITICS CAMPAIGN

You want to run a campaign filled with intrigue and interaction. More of a thriller than an action film, so to speak.

Instead of figuring out what foes you want the PCs to fight, or even a progression, you start with the ultimate end of the campaign. You foresee the PCs becoming important movers and shakers in the kingdom where they live, perhaps even working as personal advisors or confidantes of the queen. Working backward from there, you decide to put the queen in jeopardy. A duke wants the queen assassinated so that her more easily influenced sister can take the throne. This, however, isn't something you can introduce at the beginning of the campaign (it gives too much away) and you probably can't hand out that kind of information to 1st-level characters anyway. So you take another step backward from there, and determine that the PCs will have to be within the palace to get this kind of information.

From there you begin devising ways to get the PCs to frequent the palace. Perhaps they perform missions for the captain of the guard, or a member of the queen's court. This requires them to have performed a deed that would get such an employer's notice. So you create a set-up where the PCs get involved with the lord mayor of the kingdom's largest city after stopping an insane druid from unleashing a plague and thus saving the populace. This requires that the PCs get to the city, however—perhaps following clues regarding the wizard's plans found as a part of an adventure deep in the wilderness near the small town where they are from.

Having then traced the campaign arc backwards, you can plan how to weave even more courtly intrigues into the whole thing. Early on, allies of the duke (who does not know that the PCs will one day oppose him) might be up to no good, and when the PCs run afoul of them, it clues them in early to the fact that the duke is a bad guy. Perhaps at some point the duke, after noticing the PCs' actions in various events, attempts to recruit them as allies.

This is an example of figuring out the flow of the campaign in reverse order, starting with the climax and working backward. It's useful to do things this way

sometimes, because it keeps the end goal (assuming you have one) at the forefront of importance.

EXAMPLE #3: THE CENTRAL LOCATION CAMPAIGN

You decide that you want a variety of adventures in the campaign, with a number of different kinds of plots and hooks, but you want the action of the game to often revolve around a magical castle called Castle Ravenscall. You create a history of this strange magical place and populate it with interesting NPCs. The PCs first come upon the location by accident, and meet those inside. The lords of Ravenscall employ the PCs on a mission or two, paying handsomely.

As the campaign develops, Ravenscall falls under a real threat. The PCs, now firm allies of the inhabitants that live there, come to its aid. Eventually, the lords of the castle invite the PCs to live there, or use it as a base of operations. The castle itself, of course, is far more than it seems and holds its own strange adventures within its magical corridors and chambers far too large to actually be within the castle. The PCs learn the history of the castle and plumb its secrets. Intrigues and politics involving the lords of the castle lead to more interesting situations.

The castle even provides magical gateways to all sorts of interesting locations in which to have adventures, including other planes and worlds to explore. Finally, one day, once they have earned it (or perhaps once they free the castle from an ancient curse), the PCs become the new lords of Castle Ravenscall.

The important part of creating this kind of campaign is giving the castle and its denizens enough personality and quirks (many not introduced right away) so that the place never feels boring—even when it becomes familiar. This kind of campaign is fairly simple to run, no matter what kind of adventures you like to create. The location just becomes the facilitator of adventures—a kind of constant hook. You can do the same thing with a person, an organization, an artifact, or possibly other things.

THE KEY IS PLANNING

A good campaign requires planning—lots of advance planning. This goes beyond world building. World building is, in fact, a whole different topic, and one that's been well covered elsewhere, including much earlier versions of this column. Campaign planning doesn't involve the setting, but the events. This isn't about the background for your game, it's about the foreground. The plot. The exciting events that happen in the game that keep the players coming back, hungry for more. Even if you're the kind of DM who likes to "wing it" through a lot of your adventures, that doesn't mean that you shouldn't do a lot of pre-planning of the campaign beforehand.

Before the first die ever rolls on the table, rough out the kinds of things you want to have happen. Making plans based on character level is a simple method. When the PCs reach around 5th level, perhaps a plague ravages the kingdom, spurring on interesting events and adventures as the PCs either attempt to remedy the situation or just survive in its wake. Perhaps by 9th level, you want the PCs to have to journey to another plane. Your campaign plan can be as vague as that if you wish, just as long as you've got a plan. While specific details in your campaign plan will help you with things like foreshadowing (which is covered extensively in the next column), they are also dangerous because you never know what direction the PCs may want to take. So you may just want to create a little scheme for where you want the PCs to be, roughly, by 5th, 10th, 15th, and 20th level, for example. The amount of detail is up to you.

Sometimes you can plan only for the details, and not the broad generalizations. You could, for example say by around 8th level, the PCs will have met a fighter/aristocrat named Lord d'Asthon, known for deeds both foul and benevolent. Now you can use that detail to seed rumors and stories about Lord d'Asthon as you go along. You can decide what Lord d'Asthon will do later when he meets the PCs, fitting his actions into the flow of the campaign.

CAMPAIGN PLANNING AND WORLD BUILDING

Even though campaign planning differs from world building, the two can work together. In fact, they almost have to. When you plan out possible future adventures (again, even broadly), and determine the kinds of challenges you want the PCs to overcome throughout their careers, make sure that the setting information that you give them at the beginning of the game prepares them for that—or at least doesn't set them up with completely wrong expectations (unless that's specifically your goal). If you want the PCs to deal with orc tribes, some evil and some surprisingly not, by 4th or 5th level, the setting you create should not only contain orcs, but it should feature them. They should clearly be of some importance, even if it's only tales of them from long ago. People in the setting that the PCs meet should have opinions and knowledge about orcs.

Likewise, should you wish to have the PCs travel to a new continent and explore it around level 6 or 7, your setting not only needs to have such a continent, but the populace should either be aware of a mysterious "new world" across the sea or they should wonder if such a thing could be true. Further, the setting should have ships or magic capable of such a journey, and the adventurous, exploratory spirit should not be unknown (better yet, the setting should have a need worked into it that virtually *requires* that the PCs go).

While lots of different settings can contain lots of different kinds of campaigns, make sure that your setting and your desired campaign are compatible. If possible, try to engineer the setting so that it actually facilitates the campaign and encourages and features the creatures, events, and adventures you want to run.

Next Time: Recurring villains, foreshadowing, and plot twists.

Monte Cook is the author of the DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide. *Check out his publishing company, Malhavoc Press, at montecook.com.*

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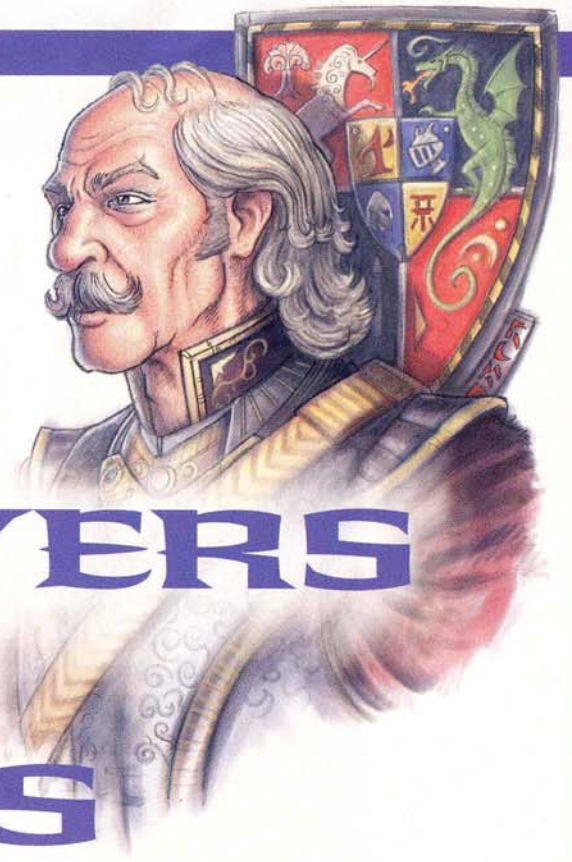


EMPLOYERS AND PATRONS

BY ALEC AUSTIN
BY JEFF CARLISLE

While most adventuring parties work for many different employers over the course of their careers, occasionally a party's relationship with an employer deepens to the point that he or she becomes their patron, sponsoring their expeditions and helping them pay their bills. Although some patrons are no more than what they seem, many use adventurers to further an ulterior motive or an alternate agenda that they do not openly profess. Even if their desire to have a job performed is genuine, their reasons often differ from what they tell the PCs.

THE SCHOLAR OF THE ESOTERIC

Professor Gerard Marsden has won some acclaim in the academic community for his work in the field of ancient history. He often hires adventurers to explore ruins and tombs and bring him any relics or antiquities they find. When a new ruin or archeological site is uncovered, Gerard may hire more powerful PCs to protect himself and his assistants from monsters while they explore and catalogue the find. Gerard pays full market price for premium relics and ancient art objects. Though his harmless appearance may attract suspicion, Gerard is just what he seems; a sharp (and sharp-tongued) old man whose mind only grows keener as his body ages.

Gerard Marsden, male human expert 5: CR 4; Medium humanoid; HD 5d6 plus 3; hp 20; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +3; Grp +2; Atk or Full Atk +2 melee (1d6–1/19–20, short sword); AL LN; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +5; Str 8, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 12.

Skills: Appraise +13, Decipher Script +13, Diplomacy +11, Gather Information +13, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Knowledge (history) +11, Knowledge (local) +11, Profession (academic) +10, Search +13, Sense Motive +10.

Feats: Diligent, Investigator, Toughness.

Languages: Celestial, Common, Draconic, Elven.

Posessions: *+1 glamered leather armor*, short sword, traveling clothes, notebooks, pen and ink.

THE SLY PHILANTHROPIST

One of the richest nobles in the kingdom, Baron Hanoval Corwin makes a habit of offering rewards to those who defeat beasts and monsters that threaten the common people. Characters who bring him proof that they have slain a monster on which he placed a bounty find him both generous and gracious, as Baron Corwin often pays a 10% bonus on a group's first kill.

Baron Corwin is genuinely concerned for the welfare of the kingdom's commoners, but he also seeks to raise his standing at court and in the eyes of the public. If the characters make a habit of slaying monsters for him, the baron gives them gifts of fine clothing and minor magical items. These items function normally and are emblazoned with the baron's crest. If the characters wear these gifts openly, the people begin to give the baron credit for any good deeds the party does. If the party performs infamous or disgraceful deeds while openly wearing the baron's gifts, he becomes ashamed of his connection with the PCs, and hires thugs to track the party down to administer a fitting punishment.

The baron's bodyguard, Wilmeena the Large, escorts him everywhere. On the rare occasions that she speaks, it's to quell the baron's excessive enthusiasm.

Baron Hanoval Corwin, male half-elf aristocrat 7: CR 6; Medium humanoid; HD 7d8; hp 31; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +5; Grp +6; Atk or Full Attack +9 melee (1d6+2/18–20, *+1 rapier*); SQ elven traits, low-light vision; AL CG; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +4; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 11, Int 14, Wis 8, Cha 15.

Skills: Bluff +12, Diplomacy +20, Knowledge (history) +12, Knowledge (nobility) +12, Listen +1, Ride +12, Search +3, Sense Motive +9, Spot +1.

Feats: Combat Expertise, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (rapier).

Languages: Common, Dwarven, Elven, Gnome.

Posessions: *+1 rapier, +1 glamered chain shirt*, noble's clothing, 2 *potions of cure moderate wounds.*

Wilmeena the Large, female human fighter 9: CR 9; Medium humanoid; HD 9d10+27; hp 76; Init +5; Spd 20 ft.; AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +9; Grp +14; Atk +17 melee (2d6+10/17–20, *+1 greatsword*); Full Attack +17/+12 melee (2d6+10/17–20, *+1 greatsword*); AL NG; SV Fort +9, Ref +4, Will +7; Str 21, Dex 12, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 8.

Skills: Listen +10, Ride +13, Spot +13.

Feats: Alertness, Greater Weapon Focus (greatsword), Improved Critical (greatsword), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Spot), Weapon Focus (greatsword), Weapon Specialization (greatsword).

Language: Common.

Posessions: *+1 greatsword, +2 full plate, gauntlets of ogre power.*

THE INSIDIOUS FINANCIER

Lann Fairweather is a prominent gnome merchant and one of the social lions of his hometown. He has a smile for everyone, and always has a few spare gold pieces for beggars and candy for the town's children. Whenever a monster visits the area or a nearby ruin is uncovered, Lann quickly hires adventurers to ensure the safety of the community.

His motives are far from pure, however. Lann secretly controls most of the town's businesses, either legitimately or through blackmail and usury. The town's most prominent citizens tremble when they receive an invitation to his home, for he will undoubtedly request favors which they cannot afford to refuse. The town mayor is his puppet, and the commander of the watch and the officers of the guard are all in his pay.

Lann conceals his underhanded dealings with a façade of generosity and goodwill, and his home and person are protected against magical surveillance. Over time, they might notice that aristocratic NPCs tremble when they mention Lann's name, or Lann might use them as pawns in an operation to extend his influence into a nearby city. Lann is a powerful wizard, and his connections provide him with allies at court and dozens of agents he could throw against the party. Of course, less-perceptive heroes might never realize that their patron is a power-hungry schemer.

Lann Fairweather, male gnome wizard 12: CR 12; Small humanoid; HD 12d4+24; hp 54; Init +1; Spd 20 ft; AC 14, touch 14, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +6; Grp +1; Atk +7 melee (1d3/19–20, *+1 dagger*); Full Attack +7/+2 melee (1d3/19–20, *+1 dagger*); SA spells; SQ low-light vision, summon familiar; AL NE; SV Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +9; Str 8, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 20, Wis 12, Cha 14.

Skills: Bluff +12, Concentration +17, Diplomacy +11, Knowledge (local) +20, Spellcraft +20.

Feats: Combat Casting, Forge Ring[B], Greater Spell Focus (enchantment), Quicken Spell[B], Scribe Scroll[B], Skill Focus (Bluff), Spell Focus (enchantment), Spell Focus (necromancy).

Languages: Celestial, Common, Elven, Gnome, Halfling.

Wizard Spells Prepared (caster level 12): 0—*daze* (DC 17), *detect magic, message, touch of fatigue* (+6 touch, DC 16); 1st—*cause fear* (DC 17), *charm person* (DC 18), *mage armor, magic missile, ray of enfeeblement* (+8 ranged touch, DC 17); 2nd—*blindness/deafness* (DC 18), *false life, mirror image, scorching ray* (+8 ranged touch), *Tasha's hideous laughter* (DC 19); 3rd—*blink, fireball* (DC 18), *fly, hold person* (DC 20), *suggestion* (DC 20); 4th—*charm monster* (DC 21), *enervation* (+8 ranged touch, DC 20), *greater invisibility, stoneskin*; 5th—*dominate person* (DC 22), quickened *magic missile*, quickened *shield, teleport*; 6th—*eyebite* (DC 22), *geas/quest* (DC 23).

Spellbook: 0—all, 1st—*alarm, disguise self, cause fear, charm person, erase, mage armor, magic missile, ray of enfeeblement, shield, unseen servant*; 2nd—*arcane lock, blindness/deafness, detect thoughts, false life, glitterdust, knock, mirror image, misdirection, scorching ray, Tasha's hideous laughter*; 3rd—*blink, dispel magic, explosive runes, fireball, fly, hold person, illusory script, nondetection, ray of exhaustion, suggestion*; 4th—*charm monster, enervation, fear, greater invisibility, Leomund's secure shelter, scrying, stoneskin*; 5th—*cone of cold, dominate person, hold monster, Mordenkainen's private sanctum, permanency, teleport*; 6th—*chain lightning, eyebite, geas/quest, mass suggestion, true seeing.*

Posessions: *+1 dagger, brooch of shielding, headband of intellect +2, pearl of power* (1st level), *potion of barkskin* (+4), *ring of mind shielding, ring of protection +2*, 4 vials of diamond dust (worth 250 gp per vial).

UNSUNG HEROES

BY RUSSELL BROWN
BY JEFF CARLISLE

Large towns and cities are full of people from different trades and different walks of life, everyone from highborn stewards to the old man that lights the street lamps at night. Most of these people are craftsmen or professionals of some kind, either independent businessmen or members of powerful guilds who pay their dues and pass on their skills to journeyman as instructed by the laws of their guildhall.

Use the following list of professions that can be found in most fantasy cities to add detail and interest to your urban encounters.

Apothecary: The town pharmacist knows the physical effects of many combinations of herbs and minerals. Apothecaries are always looking for knowledge of new herbs and formulas.

Architect: Designing large and important buildings requires a unique set of specialized skills. This NPC is part project manager, part engineer, and part artist. Architects are curious about new building styles and new building materials.

Auctioneer: Even in a large city, very expensive or unusual items may have no steady market. Sale of these items is advertised in advance and carried out by an auctioneer.

Bookkeeper: A vibrant urban economy requires large amounts of commerce, including investment, money lending, and taxation. The job of this NPC is to keep track of all the figures. He may carry some of his books with him, along with an abacus or slate tablet.

Brewer: This NPC makes ale or beer and delivers it to the local inns and taverns. He is always looking for a unique brew to give him an advantage over the competition.

Candle Maker: While the poorest cities get by on torchlight, more advanced cities burn through many hundreds of candles

and many barrels of oil every night. It is the candle maker's job to keep everyone well supplied.

Chimney Sweep: Often young boys who can fit with relative ease into narrowy spaces, a city's chimney sweeps provide a valuable service, since an untended chimney creates a dangerous fire hazard. Chimney sweeps are filthy, and as a result are often unwelcome in a city's more prosperous establishments.

Coal Burner: This person makes coal by slow-burning wood in pits out in the country and delivering it to homes and businesses inside the city. He smells of smoke and burnt pine.

Ditch Diggers: Someone has to clean out the city's gutters, middens, and sewer pits, and that job falls to these poor laborers. They dig out sewage and dump it outside the city, sometimes searching through it for unexpected treasure.

Gambler: A smart person, or one who's willing to risk a little cheating, can gamble as a profession. Gamblers tend to alternate between being totally broke and generously wealthy.

Iceman: In temperate climates, icemen cut large blocks of ice from lakes and store them in straw to be delivered to customers during warmer months.

Jailer: While almost every town has a jailer who keeps the keys to the town militia's jail cells, in many large cities, the services of the town watch or militia are inadequate. As a result, private businessmen often build jails, hire soldiers, and offer arrest, imprisonment, and justice for a price.

Lamplighter: This NPC patrols the city streets at night, making sure that the proper lamps and torches are lit, and that no one is pilfering oil. He also acts as a sort of night watchmen and has the town militia at his call.

Librarian: A library is more of a business than a public service. Books are hand-copied and expensive, so libraries are often exclusive to people who pay high membership fees. The ones that allow patrons to borrow books charge a few coppers each, and may use armed thugs to enforce due dates.

Locksmith: This profession includes making keys and locks, as well as fixing or picking existing locks. This business is usually tightly controlled by guilds and monitored by the authorities. Anyone with locksmithing skills who is not a member of the guild is assumed to be a thief.

Messenger: This NPC is the equivalent of a postal service in many towns. Messengers are summoned when there is something to be delivered and generally deliver items to a single destination at a time. Messengers are always in a hurry.

Midwife: These are generally women, and are tasked with assisting with births and tending to women's medical needs. They work closely with apothecaries and are said to have unique magical powers.

Miller: Most large towns and cities posses a mill for grinding grain into flour. The mill may be the reason the city formed in the first place. The owner and operator of the mill is an important man with a lot of local influence.

Painter: Paints are made from flax seed oils, or from agricultural products like milk or egg yolks. Without any magical or alchemical enhancements, they wear quickly, so there are always buildings in a city that need painting.

Papermaker: Large towns require detailed records, and therefore lots of paper. The papermaker makes parchment or paper and scrapes vellum for important documents. He is also called a ragman, because he wanders the streets collecting old rags to make paper.

Paver: City streets are paved by pairs of simple laborers, one pulling a cart of bricks while the other remains bent over, placing bricks at remarkable speed.

Perfumer: Most cities are crowded, with inadequate sanitation and few public baths. In such an environment, the sweet and exotic scents wafting from the perfumer's cart or shop are all the advertisement he needs. The perfumer himself is usually the finest-smelling individual in town.

Ponderator: This is the inspector of weights and measures. His duties vary from checking the weights used by merchants to tasting beer and ale to verify quality.

Scribe: In a society where many people are illiterate, being able to read and write can land you a good job. Scribes act as personal secretaries, or charge a fee to copy or translate documents.

Serf: The slaves and indentured servants of landholders may escape and hide in the city. The laws in some areas reward them with their freedom if they can avoid capture for a year. The town militia may make sweeps of the town to capture hiding serfs and collect their bounty.

Ship Caulker: Large port towns provide maintenance for the ships that come into their harbor. This laborer caulks and seals hulls and removes barnacles. He is covered in dark tar and smells of rancid fats and oils.

Steward: Wealthy merchants and noblemen are seldom seen in a city market. Instead they send one of their stewards to do their shopping and settle their affairs.

Street Cleaner: Streets are swept clean by simple laborers, sometimes filling a cart with refuse to dump outside the city, or sweeping garbage into festering gutters and middens.

Tax Collector: Every city imposes taxes of some kind. This NPC assesses how much each individual owes, based on their apparent wealth, and makes sure the money is collected. He's not very popular.

Thatcher: A thatch roof provides wonderful protection from the elements, but it takes a great deal of time to create and maintain. Thatching is a vital skill, often protected by a guild or special laws.

Town Crier: These are the newsmen of the city. Anyone who has an important message for everyone in town hires a town crier to walk the street and shout it.

Vintners: While wine is made out in the country, someone has to bring it into the city and sell it. The vintner's customers are the wealthier nobles and tradesman, not the ale-swilling commoners.

Wetnurse: Children of rich merchants and nobles may have wetnurses, brought in to care for them from the time they're born, relieving the real mother of all the tiring and tedious duties.

ONE HUNDRED USELESS ITEMS

BY RICHARD PETT
BY JEFF CARLISLE

In a room filled with magical and wondrous things, a plain and useless item sticks out like a sore thumb. This is a list of items are designed to perplex and trouble players as they seem to, and indeed have, no identifiable purpose. Alternately, you could also use them as the indispensable toys of some powerful creature that will kill anyone who has them in their possession.

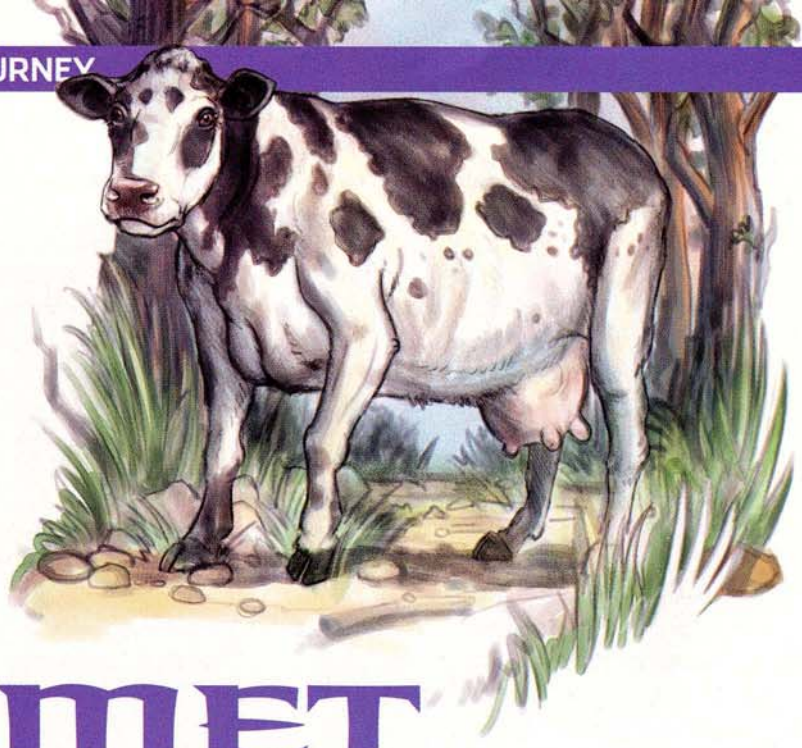
Here is a list of 100 items with no apparent use whatsoever to help add a splash of the mundane into a search through a wererat hoard, and to make the hero say "a what?" whilst wading through the coin of a giants keep.

You may wish to spice up the odd magic item by having its mundane appearance hide a secret. For example #19, the mummified rat corpse astride a ship in a bottle, could in fact be a *Jar of the Bringer of Plagues*. Once per day this item can summon a swarm of cranium rats which act under the instruction of the summoner for a period of

10 rounds. The item only functions when the user is aboard a ship at sea.

d% Item

1 Large pile of dried assassin vines
2 Map of the room/chamber the PCs have entered
3 A large fake beholder made of straw and cloth
4 Two hundred rusty nails
5 A pair of broken bellows with a spider living inside
6 A set of false teeth in a jar labelled "teeth of Olath the terrible"
7 A bald mop with the word "Karreen" scratched into the handle
8 A broken bucket plugged up with an old oily scrap of ermine
9 A 4-pint tankard with a hole in the bottom
10 Sixteen clay stirge statues
11 A jar of ointment labelled "pig soother"
12 A scarf made of owlbear fur that is incredibly itchy
13 A mirror with the words "I am the most" written on the face in goblin
14 Two dozen stuffed mice in a clay jar
15 A flag of no discernable country
16 Seven chess boards all broken in half with dried blood on them
17 A large pile of worn flagstones labelled "trap this way up"
18 A broken stone lintel from a window or stove
19 A mummified rat corpse astride a ship in a bottle
20 A very poor painting of a sheep
21 A pair of billhooks bent into the shape of a heart
22 Two large dried catfish with mousetraps in their mouths
23 A pair of papier-mâché greataxes
24 A huge stuffed hippogriff with a treasure chest instead of a head
25 A stained glass window depicting a prancing spider eater
26 A mop bucket filled with giant frogspawn
27 A necklace of troll teeth
28 Ninety seven dead large centipedes on a hat pin
29 A glass helm
30 A statue of a gargoyle with eleven heads
31 A small collection of mildewed tomes about cheese
32 Six badger leg bones in a leather bag
33 A cat saddle
34 Three melted iron bottle stoppers labelled "efreeti! – do not remove"
35 A pair of theatrical shields made of cotton
36 An enormous cheese-grater for a Huge or larger creature
37 A huge iron collar
38 A collection of various-sized manticore spikes
39 A headless hammer
40 A wooden carving of the tarrasque
41 An executioner's hood with the eyeholes sewn up
42 Four hundred and eight spent sunrods
43 A *wand of magic missile* with no charges
44 Two naga skeletons on wooden frames
45 A clock face set to 4:00
46 A collection of clothes pegs of Huge size
47 An hourglass without sand
48 A halfling clay pipe with two stems
49 A set of breaches for a storm giant
50 Thirteen black cat silhouettes made of iron
51 The stretched skin of an otyugh
52 A ship's anchor that has been broken in two
53 A large glass eye with a slit instead of a round pupil
54 An octopus tentacle painted yellow
55 A long bench labelled with obscene graffiti in Aquan
56 A 10-foot-long wooden shortsword
57 A wardrobe filled to the brim with hats of various descriptions
58 Two drawers of carefully wrapped deceased stiffened Large snakes
59 A pillow stuffed with cockatrice feathers and labelled as such
60 A broken window shutter with the word "Keep" written upon it
61 A scarecrow head likeness of one of the heroes who found it
62 A pantomime horse costume
63 A pantomime nightmare costume
64 Six corn dolls with rat skull heads
65 Five large knitted moons with cows jumping over, labeled "moooon"
66 A set of full plate for a ferret
67 A book with eleven recipes for chuul written in infernal
68 A cowbell for a titanic cow
69 Three brass figurines of imps blowing raspberries at each other
70 A mask designed to look like a beholder with glass eyes on stalks
71 A 12-pound green candle
72 A carved wooden loaf of bread 6 feet wide
73 A pair of iron spoons, one marked "good" and one marked "bad"
74 A doormat with "not welcome" written on it in Goblin
75 A large jar of liquefied grick going slightly mouldy
76 Three painted blue harps without strings
77 A torn tapestry depicting a battle between badgers and mummies
78 A Tiny ale tankard incorrectly stating that it holds a quart
79 A selection of rusty bent saws
80 A battered carpet with "speak and I shall fly" written upon it
81 Thirty-seven stones carved to look like crows
82 Two hat-stands of enormous size
83 A black cloth bag filled with odd shoes and gloves
84 A flat cap made of dire rat skins
85 An often repaired raft for a single Small creature with "da" painted on it
86 A small iron castle with a pair of iron dragons circling it
87 A charred piece of wood labelled "Last of Snurre's Steading"
88 A small chest filled with lead discs
89 An empty jar labelled "do not open, contains wail of the banshee"
90 An owl teddy bear of great size, possibly for a giant child
91 A roc-call whistle without a pea but labelled as such
92 A pair of fishing flies made from griffon feathers
93 A 20-foot iron ladder which deliberately has only three rungs
94 A stirge mobile made of wax
95 A set of iron shoes with steel laces
96 A jar with eleven eyes in it labelled "Uncle Orb RIP"
97 A wooden earring carved in the likeness of an anvil and axes
98 A battered steel horn labelled "call of the xorn"
99 A weather vane depicting a beholder chasing gnomes
100 A miniature iron golem carved to look like a milk-maid



WELL MET ON THE ROAD

BY RUSSELL BROWN
BY JEFF CARLISLE

Do your PCs assume that everyone they meet on the open road is an enemy ready to attack them, kill them, or rob them? Perhaps that's because most people they meet on the road do just that. But the roads of a prosperous nation should be filled with innocent travelers who are more likely to shy away from your band of weathered adventurers or travel with them for added protection. Here are some groups of travelers ready to hit the roads but not hit your PCs. Use them to add colorful details to your world or to kick off your next adventure. Use NPC tables in chapter 4 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* to flesh them out further.

BRIDAL PARTY

Aeryx Linnar is a half-elf designer and seller of fashionable shirts and robes (expert 5; Appraise +8, Craft (sewing) +10). He is short, even for a half-elf, with curly dark hair, a tiny mouth, and the shadow of a mustache. He wears ornate, loose-fitting clothing and lots of jewelry. Aeryx is traveling to a nearby village to marry his human bride, Krista Ghael. Most of his family and a few prominent people from the human town where Aeryz grew up are traveling with him. Right beside him are his elven father, who looks like an older version of Aeryx, and his mother, who is also short but has blonde hair, deep-set eyes, and a rounded nose. Aeryz has made sure that everyone in the group is well attired. The entire bridal party sings and jests as it walks along, offering warm comments and drinks to strangers.

CATTLE DRIVERS

A group of rural ranchers are taking four cattle to the butcher in the city. The leader is Ludenth (male human commoner 5), an older, wizened man who has been to the city many times before. He is accompanied by two young, naive relatives, Blod and Bron (both commoner 2), both visiting the city for the first time. The group started with five animals but had to give one up as a toll to a band of highway robbers, so they are very wary of armed strangers.

DEAD BODY AND ESCORT

A covered horse-drawn cart moves slowly along the road, carrying the dead body of Rostan Gateblade, an old warrior from the local city guard. The cart and horse are covered with black cloth and tassels. They are followed by the man's aging widow, Kiy (female fighter 2), who is dressed in studded leather armor from her own days in the guard. Following her are a few friends and Toran Banat (male human cleric 4), a gray-haired, tight-lipped priest of Kord from the city's House of the Dead. The procession is very solemn, and any questions from the PCs will be answered in short whispers.

DENTIST

Cyftan is a healer (expert 6; Heal +11) who specializes in ailments of the mouth and making wooden teeth. He travels from town to town, setting up shop in the open markets or outside the gates. He walks along his route, but carries his supplies and personal belongings on a donkey. Cyftan has short black hair, large bushy eyebrows, and perfect teeth. He is always jovial, even when his patients are in pain. Cyftan welcomes company and conversation and can't help staring at the PC's teeth while they talk.

MAIL COURIER

Drilath (female human ranger 3) is a rider for a private courier service. She is in a hurry to make her delivery and can only spare a few minutes to talk. She and her impressive horse wear white livery marked with a rolled-up scroll tied with a gold ribbon. Her leather pouch contains a letter from a local goldsmith to the head priest of the temple of St. Cuthbert. She has not read the letter and will not allow the PCs to do so.

NOBLE'S HOUSEHOLD

Most of the household servants of Count Jalhat Lemmund, a local noble, are on their way to prepare his seasonal home before he arrives. The group consists of eight servants, two hired guards (male human warrior 5) and a train of three mule-drawn wagons piled high with furniture, bedding, and provisions. The leader is the count's chief steward, Dustin (male elf bard 4). He has written a song to remember everything they have to do when they arrive and he sings it softly to himself and counts off tasks on his fingers as he walks along.

PRISONER AND GUARDS

Helek Higharm (male half-orc fighter 4) and two young soldiers (human warrior 1) guard a dangerous prisoner on his way to be sentenced in the city. The prisoner is Ildray (male human rogue 4; Escape Artist +5), a hired killer who attempted to kill a prosperous merchant. His hands are tied tightly behind his back (Escape Artist DC 20) and his legs are tied together on a short lead so he can't run. Helek rides on horseback while the other soldiers and Ildray travel on foot.

PROSPECTORS

A dwarf, a man, and a gnome walk beside a cart drawn by a donkey. The cart is well-covered and contains picks, shovels, tents, scales, buckets, and other mining supplies. Bingmos (male dwarf expert 4; Bluff –1,Profession (miner) +8) has what he believes is a map to an abandoned silver mine. He has convinced his two companions, Perunt (male human commoner 1) and Ardybel Droomber-vor (female gnome bard 3), to accompany him. Bingmos has warned his friends that they must keep silent about their plans, or someone may jump their claims, but he is the most talkative of the bunch.

ROAD CONSTRUCTION GANG

Three men with crossbows (male human warrior 1) watch over a band of six prisoners working on a section of the road. Two of the workers haul rocks from a wagon while the other four break the rocks into gravel with large hammers. Two of the prisoners are deserters from the army, and four are from a debtor's prison. Ightad, the leader of the guards and the only one on horseback, orders the prisoners to stop hammering as the PCs pass.

SOLDIER ON LEAVE

Denrilo Abaxi (human fighter 3) is a career soldier heading back to his hometown on a month's leave. He goes on foot with all his gear in a heavy backpack. He wears his longsword and boiled leather armor under his robes. Denrilo is looking for companions to travel with, because walking alone gives him too much time to think about whether he really wants to reenlist.

SURVEYOR AND CENSUS TAKER

Itori Cerat (female elf ranger 4) is a surveyor and mapmaker sent by the local ruler to measure his lands. She has long white hair, and a long, sharp face. Quarisi (male half-elf expert 3) is a master of numbers charged with completing a census of the land's inhabitants and their possessions. His looks favor his human side, with a round, dimpled face and a toothy smile. Both believe they must complete their tasks so the local ruler can tax his people fairly and efficiently.

TAX COLLECTOR

Choldra Urnold (half-elf aristocrat 6; Intimidate +11) travels from town to town collecting taxes due to his master, a local noble. He is very thin, with tired eyes, a long red beard, and a long curled mustache. He wears ornate blue robes and a blue stocking cap and rides a well-bred light horse. He travels with Nowulu (male human barbarian 5), a large, bald, bronze-skinned man who rides a warhorse. Nowulu helps collect taxes from unwilling clients and is charged with guarding the coffer of collected taxes. Choldra greets the PCs warmly and is happy to travel with them, but he can see that they are more well-off than the typical traveler and is curious about where they live. Nowulu remains quiet and untrusting.

WEALTHY ADOLESCENT AND GUARD

Luilt Cuyos (male human aristocrat 1) is a young noble out to see the world for the first time. He is spoiled and insufferably proud. His parents tasked the unfortunate knight, Sir Therat Reigh (male human paladin 5), with keeping the boy safe in his travels. Both ride horses and travel very light. They buy what they need in each town, though the trip may be cut short due to Luilt's liberal spending habits. Sir Therat is noticeably worn by the boy's constant prattle and welcomes conversation and companionship with anyone else.

DOWNER: PART 22

Aristide, acting as an agent of Lolth, has cornered Downer in the thieves' guild casino hideout. Arvaka, high priestess of Lolth, tasked the treacherous drow with recovering a mythic artifact from his renegade brother, Downer. The priestess even provided muscle in the unlikely form of a pack of devils. Downer's crew planned to sell the relic to a dragon on the surface, in an attempt to stabilize the war-torn Underdark. Their planning was cut short by Aristide's raid.

YOU LITTLE *TURD!* WHEN DID YOU START WORKING WITH DEVILS?
TAKE THIS *THING* BACK TO THE TEMPLE. I'D LIKE A LAST WORD WITH MY BROTHER.
FOR A DROW WHO CAN'T CAST SPELLS--
--YOU ALWAYS THOUGHT YOU WERE SO SMART.

YEAH, IT'S A SHAME HE GOT THE DAMN ULOLOK.
MAYBE NOT. WHAT THE HELL IS THAT?
I THOUGHT I *SAW* SOMETHING IN THERE.
TITAN OF CHAOS, HUH? LOOKS HARMLESS-- LIKE SOME KIND OF GROSS CAVE CHICKEN.

Story and art by **Kyle Stanley Hunter.** Lettering by **Sean Glenn.** Downer is ©2005 Kyle Stanley Hunter. A **Super Unicorn** production. **www.superunicorn.com**

COULD BE A HOOK HORROR CHICK FOR ALL I--
--GAH! IT GROWED MY FOOT BACK!
SWAK
IT IS THE ULOLOK! THAT MEANS ARI TOOK AN EMPTY VESSEL! WON'T HE BE SURPRISED?
MEANWHILE, AT THE TEMPLE OF LOLTH...
ULTIMATELY, I DECIDED TO LET MY WRETCH OF A BROTHER LIVE.
YOU BLOODY IDIOT! THERE'S NOTHING IN HERE!
NO. I DON'T... WHA?
AAAAAAAAAA
YOU'VE FAILED ME ONCE TOO OFTEN ARISTIDE, YOU WILL NOW PAY FOR THE SINS OF YOUR FAMILY!
TO BE CONTINUED

@!$%#%^ YOU, IT'S MAGIC!

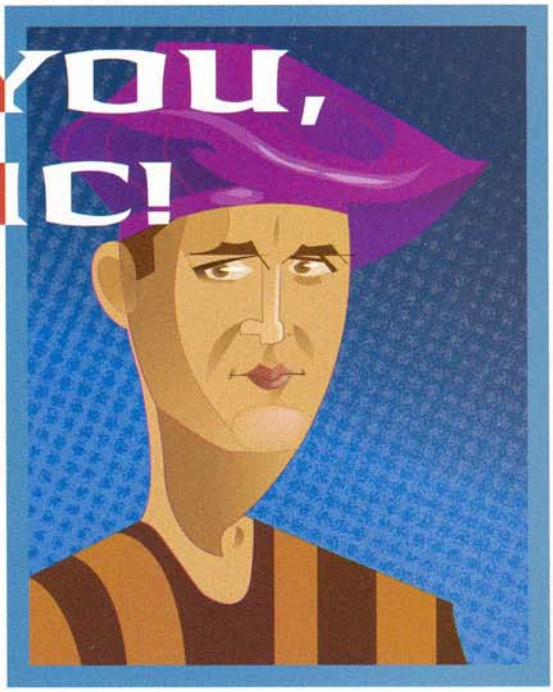


Illustration by Stan Shaw

The first time I saw *Magic: The Gathering*, I was not very impressed.

"You mean the whole game is just this deck of cards?" I asked the storeowner.

"Yeah," he said. "We have an extremely limited-edition set here."

He pointed to one of those "one of every card" box sets.

"How much is it?" I said.

"Eighty bucks."

"Eighty bucks?! Who in the world spends eighty bucks on one game?"

Of course, I'd probably spent three hundred dollars on miniatures, paints, terrain, and rules for *Warhammer 40K*—and I was in the store to buy even more space marines—but that was a *real* game, not some stupid thing you could take with you in your pocket.

"This is lame," I said. "Nobody is going to play this."

"Well, it's going to be The Next Big Thing," he said. "This collectable card game thing is going to be huge."

"No way," I said.

"Here, I'm so sure you'll like this game, you can have two starter decks. If you don't like it, it's no big deal."

Here ya go, kid! The first one's free!

I later went to my friend's house for a painting party, and when I took my marines out of the bag, he spotted my *Magic* cards.

"What's that?" He said.

"Some stupid game that Ron wants me to play."

"That's it? Two decks of cards?"

"Yeah, isn't that lame?"

"Well... it could be cool. Let's give it a try."

Come on, one game won't hurt...

Over the next week, we caught a fever, and the only prescription was more *Magic* cards. I went into my local game shop, and took it like a man when the store owner laughed at me, Comic Book Guy-style.

"I told you," he said.

"Do you still have that box set?"

"Nope. Sold it right after you left. I have some starters, and some boosters, though."

I bought everything he had, and my friends and I became full-on *Magic* Geeks™.

I played *Magic* like crazy, and it became a little bit of a problem. I would get to the game store before they opened on Saturdays so I could buy a box of starter decks. I played tournaments whenever I got the chance, and traded cards with a ferocity I didn't know existed back when I was trading Roberto Clementes for Fernando rookie cards in elementary school. I spent so much money on *Magic* cards, Richard Garfield should have a "sponsored by Wil Wheaton" plaque on one of his yachts! My fever had become a full-on disease.

The flames that burn hottest burn out the quickest, though, and I "tapped out" right around the time *Ice Age* was released. Or maybe it was *Antiquities*. Or *Arabian Knights*. The whole thing is really a junkie haze, complete with a baby crawling on the ceiling gripping an Unlimited Mox Set in his knife-like teeth, and a swimming experience that I'd really rather not recount. I put my cards in a shoebox in the garage, and went back to *40K* and *Ogre*.

I didn't really pay much attention to *Magic* until about a month ago, when my stepson Nolan wandered in from the garage, that long-forgotten shoebox in his hands.

"Wil! You have *Magic* cards!" He said, "Will you teach me how to play?"

I'm always looking for ways to bond with my stepkids, and over the last year, most of our bonding has come over various geeky games.

"I'd love to play with you," I said, as I picked up the box and opened it. I looked in, and saw that one of my old dueling decks was still intact: a red and green beauty of about 60 cards. I reviewed the rules, and we were playing within an hour.

I clobbered him for most of our early duels, but Nolan never gave up. He tried out different decks and spent a lot of time online picking up strategies. After about a week of playing games after school and every night between dinner and *The Simpsons*, the tide slowly shifted, and he started winning more and more games. My wife took him to a gameshop about two weeks ago, and he returned with his own white and blue deck... and now he's absolutely kicking my ass.

While we play, we talk about a lot of things. Some of them are important (our blended family, some struggles he's having grokking algebra and girls), and others aren't (*Italian Job* or *Ocean's Eleven*? *Halo 2* or *San Andreas*?), but we have bonded, and built memories that will last long after we've put the cards back into the shoebox.

"This is really fun, Wil," he said in a recent game, after he wasted me before I could get a single creature into play.

"It is. Just make sure you don't go nuts with buying cards."

"Why would I need to do that? You've got about a bazillion cards in the garage."

"That's right. Don't make the same mistakes I did."

We laughed together.

"Want to play once more?" He said.

"I'll play with you as much as you want, kiddo."

Check out Wil's blog at wilwheaton.net.

believe.
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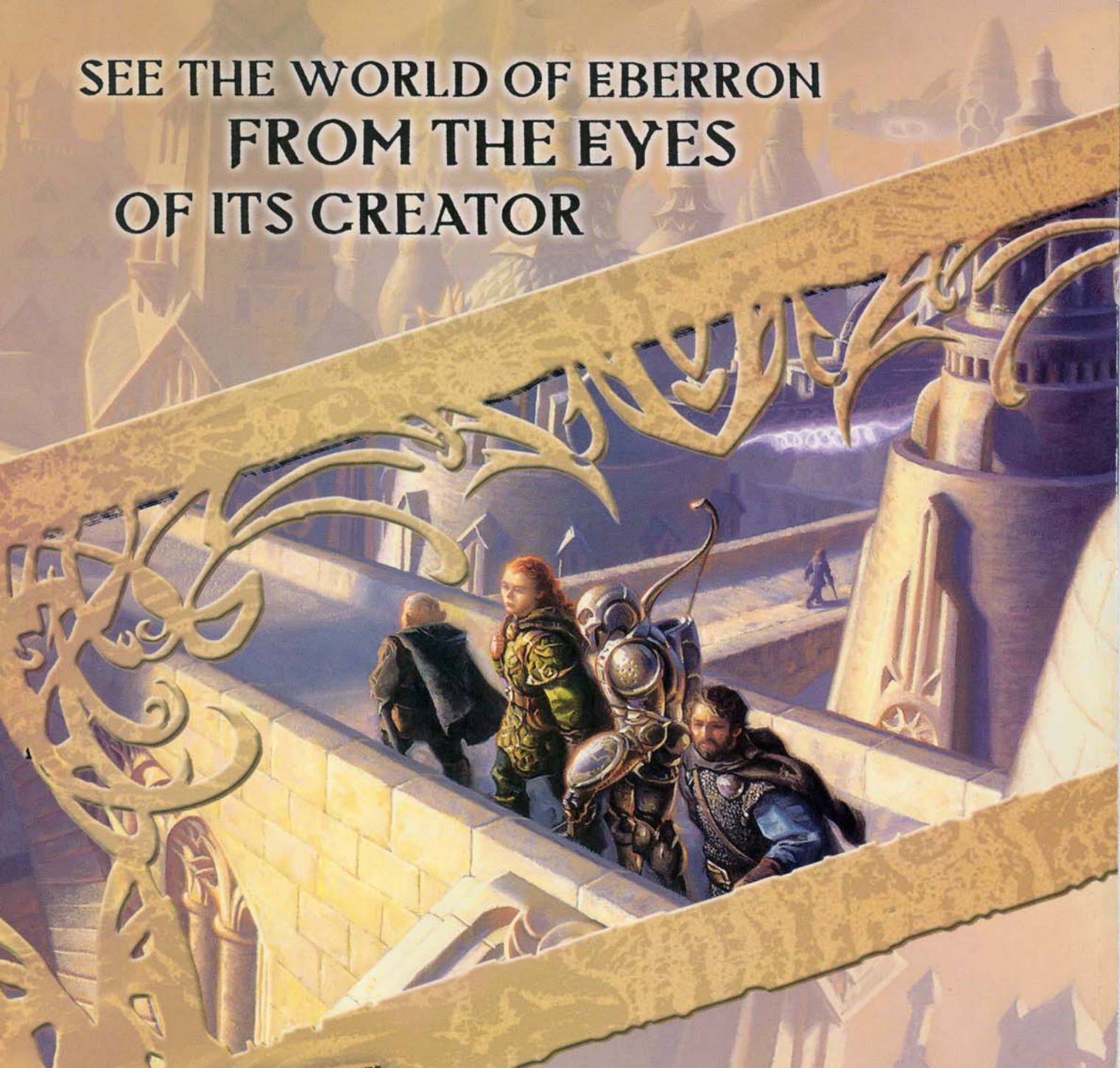

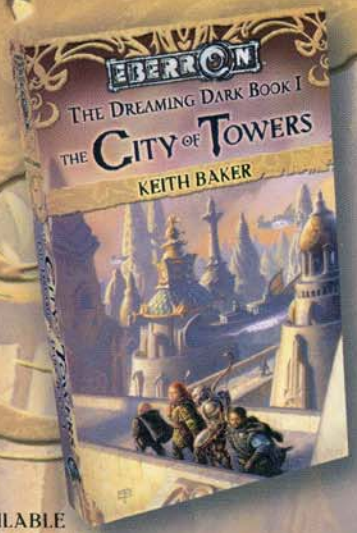

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